Understanding and Designing Place - Considerations on Architecture and Philosophy

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The idea for the present book and the seminar that preceded it was born on May 6, 2016, following the seminar *Atmospheres in Architectural Research and Education* held at the School of Architecture at Tampere University of Technology (TUT) and organised by the editors of the present book. Our keynote speaker Juhani Pallasmaa suggested that we organise our next seminar on the theme of *place*, and invite Jeff Malpas, who was planning a lecture tour of the Nordic countries in 2017, to be a keynote speaker. Juhani promised to be a second keynote speaker and Jeff Malpas kindly scheduled his lecture tour to fit our seminar. Finally, Alberto Pérez-Gómez kindly agreed to come to Finland at very short notice in order to join our seminar as a third keynote speaker.

The concept of *place* was also a key theme in Klaske Havik's architectural design courses held at TUT in 2017. In the spring design course *Unveiling Place* students were challenged to find and design an appropriate place for a museum in Tampere to house the Finnish Moomin characters of Tove Jansson.[1] Klaske's co-teacher, PhD candidate Sanna Peltoniemi organised an exhibition of a selection of the studio works in connection with the seminar. The photomontage by student Noomi Narjus, capturing the atmosphere of the Laukontori square, one of the sites for the museum, was used as the poster for the seminar and has now become the cover image of the present publication. During the autumn semester, the course *Memory of Place* focused on public space and public buildings in the Tampere neighbourhoods of Pyynikki and Amuri.[2] The latter studio is presented in Klaske Havik's article in this book, and the participating students Annu Kumpulainen,

Pekko Sangi, Yiran Yin and Clara Grancien gave permission for samples of their work to be included.

Professor Olli-Paavo Koponen helped in the general organisation of the seminar and provided the opening address, welcoming the invited speakers and audience. Pictures from the seminar were taken by photographer Arto Jalonen, who also videotaped the seminar's final panel discussion for later editing. Susanna Elmnäinen provided a transcript of the discussion, also included in the book. Jutta Varin was of great help with the organisation of travel and other practical matters.

DATUTOP series editors Gareth Griffiths and Minna Chudoba gave us the opportunity to publish the seminar material in the publication series on architecture theory. Gareth's assistance, in copy-editing and proofreading the contents of the book, has been invaluable.

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The editors of this book wish to express their sincere gratitude to all the above-mentioned persons and thank them for their contributions to the seminar and to the book.

Endnotes

1. The Professional Course of Architectural Design, Spring 2017, *Unveiling Place: Moomin Museum in Tampere*, taught by Klaske Havik, Sanna Peltoniemi, Jouni Kulmala, Elina Koivisto, Noora Aaltonen, Susanna Elmnäinen and Juuso Horelli.

2. The Advanced Course of Architectural Design, Autumn 2017, *Memory of Place: Public space and public buildings in the Pyynikintori district*, taught by Klaske Havik, Sanna Peltoniemi, and Jenni Poutanen.

INTRODUCTION

Klaske Havik & Pekka Passinmäki

The present book addresses a topic that seems common-place, and yet is often overlooked in many architectural debates and practice. Everything takes place, and architecture, by default, is a profession that deals with, intervenes in, transforms and creates places. However, in contemporary architecture, in the globalized world of today, the understanding of the particular place in which a building or a city is situated is either taken for granted or not addressed at all. In this publication, that was preceded by an international seminar held at Tampere University of Technology School of Architecture in Tampere, Finland, in 2017,[1] we aimed to bring the concept of place back to the centre stage, and to reflect on the experience of place and the complexities of situation from both a philosophical and a practical perspective. Acknowledging that place is a complex phenomenon, the present publication focuses on understanding and designing place from different perspectives. In doing so, it will specifically draw on connections between architecture and philosophy in addressing issues of place.

In his book *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (1999), Jeff Malpas addresses the complexity of place in the following manner: "Place possesses a complex and differentiated structure made up of a set of interconnected and interdependent components – subject and object, space and time, self and other [...] the complexity of place does not entail a dispersion of elements but rather enables their "gathering together" – their interconnection and unification – in such a way that their multiplicity and differentiation can be both preserved and brought to light."[2] Malpas' contribution in the

present publication, titled *Place, Truth, and Commitment*, starts exactly from the above observation, that even though "nothing is that is not placed", many contemporary architects seem to have forgotten about the intrinsic relationship between architecture and place; they often regard the places in which they intervene as mere "sites". Malpas calls for a renewed attention to place in architecture and argues for a more topographical or topological understanding of architecture. He opens up the philosophical field of place by discussing its specificity and its relational character, its boundaries and its openness, its determinacy and indeterminacy, its singularity and its plurality. Indeed, place comes to the fore as an ambiguous phenomenon; each place is specific, but at the same time it is related to many other places, it is singular and precise, while it is experienced differently by different people, and it can possess different meanings simultaneously.

The multiplicity of possible meanings of place is also discussed in Alberto Pérez-Gómez's article *Emerging Place in Contemporary Architecture*, in which he critically discusses the notion of *genius loci* that was first brought to the fore by Norwegian architect and theorist Christian Norberg-Schulz in the 1970s.[3] Even though *genius loci* has not lost its importance for architecture, Pérez-Gómez argues that there is a danger in understanding this "identity of place" in a far too limited and one-dimensional way. As we learned from Malpas, place is indeed by no means a fixed phenomenon, and defining a place's identity in a too narrow manner may risk the experiencing of the place in its full richness. There are different ways to think about the spirit of place, and even though each place is specific and singular, at the same time it is dynamic and complex, and never experienced in the same way by every person. In his book *Attunement: Architectural Meaning after the Crisis of Modern Science* (2016),[4] Pérez-Gómez suggests that the task for architecture is in fact to reveal place, in its complexity, to find ways to "attune" the multiple dimensions of place with the people and practices that are to inhabit or use it.

Continuing the discussion about the position of the architect regarding the meaning of place, Juhani Pallasmaa shares some of his own experiences of understanding the existential meaning of place in his contribution *Placing the Mind – Place and Existential Meaning in Architecture.* He focuses on the mediating role of architecture, between the physical and mental worlds that we both inhabit. As places are indeed experienced in multiple ways, they are "lived" rather than fixed and determined, and Pallasmaa argues that it is precisely this experience of "placeness" that architecture can create. He discusses our existential relationship with places from a biological perspective, explaining how our understanding of place is rooted in humankind and related to primordial experiences of survival.

The idea that the architect's task is to design places that people find meaningful is further explored in Pekka Passinmäki's contribution *Technology, Focality and Place: On the Means and Goals of Architecture*. He argues that, even if our everyday life seems dominated by technological devices and structures, there are moments "when the holding sway of technology breaks down and we feel our lives to be full of meaning". Passinmäki connects the idea of meaningful moments to the notion of "focal events" as defined by American philosopher Albert Borgmann. Focal events are based on focal things and practices, and by using Peter Zumthor's practice as an example, Passinmäki studies how Borgmann's ideas can be understood and implemented in architecture.

Finally, in the context of architectural education, Klaske Havik discusses how architects can be taught to understand the complexity of the experience of place and architecture and to develop designs accordingly. In her text *Passing the Threshold – Narrative Methods for Topo-analysis*, she refers to the idea of "topo-analysis" as a field of research,[5] connecting the poetic

imagination to the physical reality of place. American philosopher Edward S. Casey argued that: "Less a method than an attitude, topo-analysis focuses on the placial properties of certain images."[6] In the Advanced Course of Architectural Design at TUT School of Architecture in 2017, different approaches to topo-analysis were explored for the Amuri neighbourhood in Tampere. Literary sources, such as Väinö Linna's novel *Musta Rakkaus* [Dark Love] (1948) set in the area and poems about the demolition of the former workers' houses, were used to understand the different temporalities of the place, while interviews and site-specific analyses of materials and details were explored in order to understand the current relationship between inhabitants and their environment. This multi-layered analysis of the neigbourhood allowed the students to develop responsible strategies for design.

The final chapter is derived from a panel discussion among keynote speakers – Malpas, Pérez-Gómez and Pallasmaa – that was moderated by Havik, as they gathered together at the end of the seminar in Tampere. Following the perspectives offered on place, *Discussion: Place in Architectural Design and Education* raised the question what a closer attention to the importance of place would mean for architectural practice and education. The discussion is a call for criticality, as well as one for modesty: to understand place, we need to be able to be attentive, to listen; to be attentive to the world around us, as well as to the very fundamentals of architecture as a practice of making, revealing and imagining place. We hope that the perspectives offered in the present publication will provide architects and students with insights to include the place more consciously in their work, and create architectures that unveil, reveal, extend and evolve the specific characteristics of the places they are situated in.

Endnotes

1. The seminar on architecture and philosophy *Understanding and Designing Place* was held at Tampere University of Technology, School of Architecture, on Monday 3rd April 2017. (Nowadays Tampere University, School of Architecture, since the two universities of Tampere merged at the beginning of 2019.)

2. Jeff Malpas, *Place and Experience, A Philosophical Topography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). pp.173-174

3. Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1976).

4. Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Attunement: Architectural Meaning after the Crisis of Modern Science* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2016).

5. As discussed, for instance, by Gaston Bachelard, who describes topo-analysis as "the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives" in Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press,1994), p.8.

6. Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place – A Philosophical History* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1997), 288.

PLACE, TRUTH AND COMMITMENT

Jeff Malpas

Let me begin with an old claim, one that can be found in Aristotle, but is earlier than Aristotle: namely, that nothing is that is not placed.[1] Place then is the fundamental notion in any thinking of appearance or presence, and so in any thinking of the world or indeed of ourselves. This ought to be a claim that takes a special significance for architects, since surely they, above all others, are explicitly concerned with *place*. Unfortunately, this is not always borne out by the actual practice of architecture, especially contemporary architecture. To take one example: for all its brilliance, the work of Zaha Hadid, whose recent death was such a shock, seems to have had little to do with place other than as mere site. Indeed, while her buildings often have a sculptural quality that can be understand as directly related to *space*, it is hard to see how those buildings relate in any significant way to the *places* in which they are situated (see, for instance, Fig. 1: Hadid and Schumacher's Heydar Aliyev Center in Baku, Azerbaijan). This is not only true of Hadid's buildings, of course, but applies to many contemporary buildings that often seem to be related only contingently to the places in which they appear – those places are mere sites. This is itself a function of the character of technological modernity to which architecture is closely tied. Modernity operates in and through a mode of spatialization in which things are increasingly rendered as part of a single encompassing system. As spatializing, that system is also both homogenising and quantizing. Architecture becomes both an expression of this form of spatialization and one of the means

Fig. 1. Heydar Aliyev Center in Baku, Azerbaijan, 2012. Zaha Hadid Architects.

by which it operates.

Yet what would it mean for architecture to operate differently – to operate in a way that was indeed attentive to place – and why should it even try to so? I want to address those two questions, but I want to do so as part of a broader account of the role of place in thought and practice – as part of a sketch of what I have elsewhere called a 'topographical' or 'topological' approach. Such an approach takes seriously the old claim I mentioned at the start – that nothing is that is not placed – and tries to understand what that means and might imply.

It should already be clear that to talk of place here is not the same as to talk merely of space. Place implies space. Yet this is not in the sense that every place is in space – as if place were identical with simple location or position within a larger spatial expanse. This is the notion of place and space that seems to be at work in Cartesian and Newtonian thinking, and in it place seems reduced or reducible to the position

specified by a set of coordinates within an extended plane or dimension. If we take seriously the notion of place as a sui generis concept, and if we attend to place as it presents itself phenomenologically, that is, at is appears in its own appearing, then it is not that place appears within space but, more accurately, space itself appears always and only from within place. Place is no mere position, since place carries a sense of openness and opening that position alone does not possess. Places have space, they give space – and it is this that is actually at issue in being placed as opposed to merely *being positioned*. But place is not a matter of space alone. Places have a certain openness that is the origin of space, but that openness is also dynamic and originary, it is an opening. Thus, if space names the *expansive* character of place, then time names its character as *adventual* – as an originary opening as well as an openness.

As opening and openness, place is not substantive – and indeed it withdraws in the face of that which emerges within it. It is thus that it is sometimes said that place is nothing. It is partly for this reason that the philosophical history of place has been one in which place constantly disappears in favour of other notions. Since place is that which allows the appearing of things, so it tends to give place to that which appears. Thus, things readily come to the fore instead of place; space and time become dominant over the place out of which both emerge. Place becomes, as Aristotle said, obscure and hard to find[2] – a characteristic place shares with nature – "nature [*physis*] loves to hide" says Heraclitus,[3] and he could have said it of place too.

The tendency for place to disappear is evident not only in the tendency for place to recede into the background – just as does the horizon of the visual field – but also in the way place constantly opens up towards other places. This indicates something of the relational character of place – every place implicates other places both within and without. This also means

that the mode of appearance in place is itself relational – even though this too is often overlooked by the tendency for what appears to be given precedence over its mode of appearing. *Nothing is that is not placed* thus means, given the relationality of place, that nothing is except in relation. Yet crucially, this relationality is itself always a relationality that emerges in and through place – and as such it is a relationality that is like the relationality of a region – and this connects directly with what lies at the very heart of the notion of place, the idea of bound or limit. The relationality of a region is a bounded relationality.

To say that nothing is that is not placed is to point to the character of being, and so of appearing and presencing, as always occurring in finitude – being belongs to the here and the now. Neither openness nor opening make any sense except with respect to that within which they occur. The way place is tied to bound or limit is especially clear in Aristotle's characterisation of *topos* as the innermost motionless boundary of that which contains[4] – essentially an idea of place as inner bounding surface that is well expressed in the notion of the horizon. Yet the idea of place as bound is also at work in the Platonic conception of the chora as that which, through its withdrawal, supports things into emergence, giving them room in which to emerge.[5] Only because the *chora* bounds, can it be said to withdraw and give room in this way.

Place is itself the bounding surface that, in its withdrawal, allows the opening up of the boundless. The idea of bound or limit that appears here is thus one that takes bound or limit to be essentially *productive*, rather than merely *restrictive*. Place is productive – it opens up – in this same way. Yet its productivity is based in its singularity and finitude: the world opens up only in and through the singularity and finitude of place. One might also say: only through the unity of place is the plurality of appearance possible – the productivity of place is founded in its unity and unity itself is always plural.

The productivity of place, its plurality in unity, means that there is a curious interplay that occurs between the placedness of being, understood as a form of *determination* of being, and placedness as the opening up into the *indeterminate*, where indeterminacy is the obtaining of a multiplicity of possibilities – a multiplicity that is essential to the opening up of world. Being in place is thus a matter of both the 'here' and the 'there'; of proximity and distance; of singularity and plurality; of sameness and difference. Indeed, it is only within and with respect to place that any of these notions possess real meaning or significance.

Human being itself resides in place – and only in place – so that who and what we are is itself determined by our finite mode of being in place. Here is one manifestation of the relationality, not only of place, but of the appearing that arises in and through place. As place is productive, so our own being placed does not function as some simple constraint that makes us less than we might be, but is instead that on the basis of which any and every possibility available to us is opened up. Our being bound to place is thus itself productive. It is only through place that we are opened up to what goes beyond any particular place. The human is thus the one who walks the boundary of the boundless.

If the dynamic structure of place is characterised by this interplay between the 'determining' and the 'indeterminate', then neither place itself nor individual places – nor the bounds and limits associated with them – can be understood as capable of being given a unique or absolute determination. In this respect, place and its boundedness exhibit exactly the same character as the horizonality of the visual field – the horizon functions to constitute the field, and so in a sense to determine it, and yet the horizon cannot itself be made fully determinate. Here indeterminacy can be seen to be a consequence of productivity. Moreover, the very character of

the boundary as *connecting* at the same time as it also *separates* means that the identity of the place that the boundary defines is also indeterminate – so that, as I emphasised earlier, every place has enfolded in it, and is enfolded within, other places. This does not mean that individual places lack any character that belongs to them, but rather that their character is such as always to admit of other possibilities, other descriptions – is always such as to implicate other places.

Inasmuch as human being, no less than any other kind of being, is also essentially placed, so the indeterminacy of place makes it impossible completely to distinguish human persons from the places and locales in which they live and in which their lives are articulated – as it also makes it impossible completely to separate individual lives from the lives of others, and so reinforces the intertwined character of the human and the placed. To think the human is always to come back to place. This does not mean, however, that place is to be understood as determined by the human. Place is not, contrary to the claims of Lefebvre, Massey, Harvey and many others, a *construction* of the human (whether via the social or the political).[6] Place may itself come to appearance in relation to the human, and most importantly in relation to language, but place is not itself determined by the human. It is rather that which provides the ground of determination for the human.

In spite of the primacy of place, still much of contemporary thinking is characterised precisely by its neglect, sometimes even its refusal, of place – and especially by the neglect and refusal of what is central to place, namely the idea of bound or limit. In this respect, contemporary thinking remains within a clearly modern frame, since one of the characteristic features of modernity, perhaps even its defining feature, has been its opposition to bound or limit. Modernity, which also includes those varieties of modernity among which must be included the post-modern, can be understood as being characterised by

the attempt to abolish the limits on the human, to transcend the bounds imposed by place, to open up a realm of unrestricted spatiality – an attempt that can be seen in the concern with constant increase, whether of resources, productivity, wealth, or information, in the preoccupation with speed and immediacy, and in the increasing push towards supposedly globalized systems and perspectives.

Oddly, this modern project can be seen to be at work both in contemporary forms of bureaucratized and corporatized capitalism as well as in many forms of contemporary social-scientific and even architectural thinking. In this respect, rather than constituting a turn towards space or place, the spatialized rhetoric that now abounds across many disciplines is essentially a mirroring in theoretical terms of the same modernist reframing of the world that has been gathering pace over the last few hundred years. It is thus no accident, for instance, that the language of networks, flows, and connectivity is to be found at the heart of contemporary corporate discourse no less than in much contemporary theory.

In architecture, or at least in the actuality of practice, ideas of bound and limit are harder to avoid – if only because both economics and physics impose certain absolute constraints on building and design. Yet architecture is no less characterised by a tendency to overlook and neglect place, and so also to overlook bound and limit, than any other area of contemporary endeavour. I mentioned the work of Zaha Hadid at the outset, and I would suggest that it is precisely through the way in which her buildings seem to manifest a desire for the realisation of an almost pure sculptural form that they are often strangely disconnected from the actuality of the places in which they appear. This may in fact be part of their attraction – an attraction that belongs not only to Hadid's work but to the larger body of contemporary architecture, of which her work is exemplary: such work represents a certain assertion

of the power of design over and against the material actuality in which any such design may be realised. Not only the self-assertiveness of design is at issue here, either, but also the self-assertiveness of that in whose service design is placed: capital, corporate interest, civic or national identity, the 'brand'.

The fact that contemporary architecture may indeed concern itself with space and spatiality does not of itself mean that it is also concerned with place. The very concern with one may be part of a refusal of the other. Modernity's spatializing tendencies are themselves part of modernity's refusal of place – and so the refusal of bound and limit. But why should such a refusal be problematic? Why does it matter whether we concern ourselves with place or with space? The answer is that we have no choice here. Just as who and what we are is determined by place, so our concern with place can never be wholly lost, only covered over. All of our thought and action begins in place, as it must, since only in place can anything appear or come to presence at all. So, in forgetting or overlooking place we forget or overlook that to which we are nevertheless always already turned, *already committed.* It is a commitment we may forget but can never evade. Being is being in place and being in place is orientation; only on the basis of such orientation is any human being or activity, any human 'living' or 'building', possible.

To say this is not to invoke any spurious notion of 'authenticity' or the need for 'authentic dwelling'. Both such terms are ones I would avoid, since both carry problematic connotations and tend to obscure rather than illuminate what is at issue here. But it is the case that in emphasising the way we are already given over to a concern with place, just in virtue of the placed character of our own being, so one might say that the concern with place is itself tied closely to our parallel concern with truth. To attend to truth is to do no more than attend to what is and to the manner of our speaking about

what is. What could be more basic – or issue a more basic demand – than this? To attend to truth, to attend to what is, is to do no more and no less than to attend to the place in which we find ourselves, and to what appears before us and with us in that place. Truth, as I use it here, is not some form of relativized truth, even though it is always a placed truth, since there is no sense of truth other than that which arises in the place of our speaking. Though truth belongs to that place, it nevertheless opens to the world, in the same way that place also opens to the world. Truth arises in place, and belongs to place, as it also arises in, and belongs to, the place in which human beings encounter one another. Truth is thus essentially founded in the mode of revealing that belongs to place. This sense of truth is absolute, even though it is not eternal – just as place, though it opens up to the world, nevertheless does not itself possess any claim on eternity.

Our standing in relation to place and our standing in relation to truth does not bring with it any claim on eternity, and neither does it bring any claim on certitude. We are committed to place and to truth, and that commitment is what opens up the possibility of a human mode of being, but it does not do so in a way that is essentially finite, and so remains indeterminate and questionable. To stand in place and in the truth is to stand in the midst of questionability, to stand in a way that demands questioning, that demands criticality.

The failure to attend properly to place and so to truth is to fail to attend to the commitment that we already have as human beings – it is also, therefore, to fail to attend to our own being as human. Again, to come back to place and truth is to come back to the human, but it also brings with it a genuinely critical stance – as is inevitable given the way place itself brings bound and limit into view. Critique is, in this sense, constituted *topographically* – it is an activity, a mode of reflection and action, that depends on attentiveness to bound,

to limit, and so also to place and to truth. Perhaps nowhere is this clearer than in Immanuel Kant's construal of his own critical project as a form of 'rational geography' that aimed to found knowledge by mapping its proper bounds – hence Kant's original conception of the first *Critique* as an inquiry into 'the bounds of sensibility and reason'. The topographical nature of critique might also be seen to underpin Martin Heidegger's emphasis on the primacy of questioning – such questioning, and the listening or responsiveness with which it is also intimately connected, is essentially a matter of orientation towards the place out of which questioning emerges and to which it always turns us back. Here too, the connection between critique, questioning, and *reflection* – the last of these understood as a returning of vision, and so as having an implicitly placed character – reinforces the topographic structure at issue.

This topographic structure not only belongs to critique in some general sense, but also to critique as it drives ethical thought and behaviour, and also, I would argue, as it drives a properly democratic politics (such a politics being understood as essentially based in the capacity for public decision-making and debate). This is a particularly important conclusion, since all too frequently any thinking that gives salience to place has been assumed to be ethically problematic and politically reactionary, even to the extent that it has been taken to provide the foundation for and impetus towards exclusionary and even violent attitudes and behaviour.

The considerations adduced in the preceding pages ought already to cast doubt on the idea that there is any such general argument against place, or against any thinking that gives centrality to place. In fact, such arguments typically rely on treating place in a way that actually goes against the character of place itself: they tend to disregard the way place is itself bound up with both identity and difference as well as with

plurality and indeterminacy; they tend to ignore the productive character of place in its relation to the human – and so ignore the ontologically basic character of the relation between place and human being; and as they thereby also overlook the productive character of bound and limit, so they tend also to overlook the necessary foundation of critique in a recognition of bound and limit, and so in a recognition of place.

The appeal to place can of course be mistaken, and sometimes misused. Yet there is also considerable evidence to suggest that the refusal and denial of place, and the human connection to place, has been just as destructive as any assertion of place-based exclusivity. This might be thought to be most obviously so in respect of the environment, where a disregard for place can be seen as making possible environmental neglect and harm, but such destructiveness is also evident in more immediate human terms. The Highland clearances and the enclosure movement in Britain of the 18th and early 19th centuries provide two such instances, but many more are evident in the experiences of indigenous peoples from Australia – Tasmania provides an especially clear example – and around the world in the face of colonisation and 'modernisation'. Moreover, displacement and the destruction of place have often been employed against individuals and communities from ancient times until the present as deliberate techniques of war and oppression. Thus the destruction of places, and the material culture associated with them, has been a widespread tactic in times of conflict across the twentieth century from Lhasa to Sarajevo.[7] The Nazi assault on Jewish identity and culture in the Holocaust itself operated as an attack on the very possibility of a Jewish place in the world, involving displacement and dispossession as well as physical violence, cruelty, and murder.

There is no question that place can figure in problematic forms of action and discourse – just as other key ideas,

whether of the good, the just, the virtuous, or the democratic, are similarly not immune from being drawn upon within what we may otherwise regard as ethically suspect or politically reactionary usages. That a concept is deployed to problematic ends does not imply that the concept is itself problematic – although it may well tell us something about the importance or centrality of that concept to human life and thought. If we attend to the character of place itself, rather than merely to the rhetoric that often surrounds it, then place not only appears as a central structure in the very constitution of things, and so also in the constitution of the human, but also turns out to be foundational to the very possibility of the ethical and political. It does so in part through its connection to the notions of truth, of limit, of questionability, and of critique, that I sketched above, but also through the way in which the human is itself constituted *as human* through its being given over to an essential placedness, an essential finitude, an essential limitation – an essential *fragility*. Turning back to place is a turning back to the human, but to the human understood as always in relation, always in place, always in question. In this respect, far from taking us away from the human, as Emmanuel Levinas claims,[8] the turn to place brings us back into genuine proximity to the human, to ourselves as well as others, and so into proximity to the real ground of ethical obligation, ethical responsibility and ethical responsiveness – it brings us back to our own fundamental commitments in the world.

What of architecture in such a turn to place? Inasmuch as architecture is indeed so closely allied to modernity, so architecture might seem to find itself in a troubled situation – at once concerned with place in a direct way, and yet also prone to the forgetting and refusal of place. The problem is exacerbated by the character of the contemporary academy, in which architecture is itself partly embedded, as itself taken up by a concern with displaced and quantized modes of thought

and practice. The concern with place is not, of course, merely a concern with place as itself the focus of inquiry. Part of what I have emphasised here is that the turn to place is essentially a turn back to our own place, and so a turn back that is essentially reflective, questioning, and critical – it is a turn back to our own selves and to a fundamental mode of self-questioning and self-critique. For architecture, or any practice, to attend to place is to attend to its own bounds and limits, to its own place or *topos,* and any such turn is likely to bring with it a turn back to a certain sort of caution and modesty – the latter being qualities that are not often evident in much contemporary architectural practice. Such a turn back to place is not absent from contemporary architecture. Indeed, one might argue that it has always been there as part of a modest and humanistic strand within even architectural modernism itself.[9]

I began with a building by Zaha Hadid – one of those iconic buildings that are now sold around the world to cities and organisations that seek to gain some lustre from association with an internationally famous architectural name. The very style of this architecture, and its prioritization of visual form over almost everything else,[10] is indicative of a form of architecture as the embodiment of a mode of celebrity culture that is very much a part of contemporary capitalism – a celebrity culture also tied to what Guy Debord called the "society of the spectacle".[11] If architecture is genuinely to engage with place, then one might well argue that it must also disengage from such celebrity, from such spectacle, from such an emphasis on sheer visuality. If that were to happen, then one would need to see a turn away from the obsession with architects like Hadid and their buildings, and back towards more modest and mundane forms of architectural practice – towards a greater concern with architecture as it functions in those many ordinary buildings of our everyday lives.

Yet if I began with a reference to Hadid, it is perhaps appropriate to end with a reference to another imposing figure of twentieth-century architecture – one whose work is sometimes seen as establishing the tradition of 'iconic' architecture to which Hadid's buildings belong. The figure I have in mind is Jørn Utzon, and the building is Utzon's Opera House on Bennelong Point in Sydney Harbour (Fig. 2). Although as striking in its appearance as any building by Hadid, Utzon's Opera House is based around the basic form of a canopy over a raised platform. The famous 'sails' were said by Utzon to have been inspired by images of clouds. Although Utzon had never been to Sydney when he formulated the design for the building, he had spent considerable time studying the topography of the site and the surrounding land and harbourscape. Utzon's building is thus no mere formalist exercise, but rather represents the development of a basic architectural form, understood as oriented in a setting, developed in a way that is itself related to the elements around it. Could one imagine Utzon's building anywhere other than Sydney? Or if one could, would it operate in the same way as it does on its Bennelong Point site? Utzon's own architectural practice was characterised by a concern to design spaces that did indeed respond to the places in which they were situated, and that therefore also responded to the human engagement with those spaces. It is perhaps unsurprising then, that the influence of Utzon on Australian architecture has, for the greatest part, been in the direction of exactly that more modest form of modernism that is oriented as much to place as to the human, and to criticality as well as to limit.

Fig. 2. Sydney Opera House (1973), Jørn Utzon.

Endnotes

1. See Aristotle, *Physics IV*, 208a30, *The Complete Works of Aristotle,* ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), Vol. I, p.354. The claim, though differently put, also appears in Plato, *Timaeus*, 52b, in *The Collected Dialogues*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp.1178-1179.

2. Aristotle, *Physics IV*, 212a8, p.360.

3. Heraclitus, B123DK, in Kathleen Freeman, *Ancilla to the Presocratic Philosophers* (Harvard MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), p.33.

4. Aristotle, *Physics IV*, 212a20, p.361.

5. Plato, *Timaeus*, 52b-52d, pp.1178-1179.

6. See, for instance, David Harvey: "Place, in whatever guise, is like space and time, a social construct…The only interesting question that can then be asked is: by what social process(es) is place constructed?", *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), p.261.

7. See Robert Bevan, *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War* (London: Reaktion, 2006).

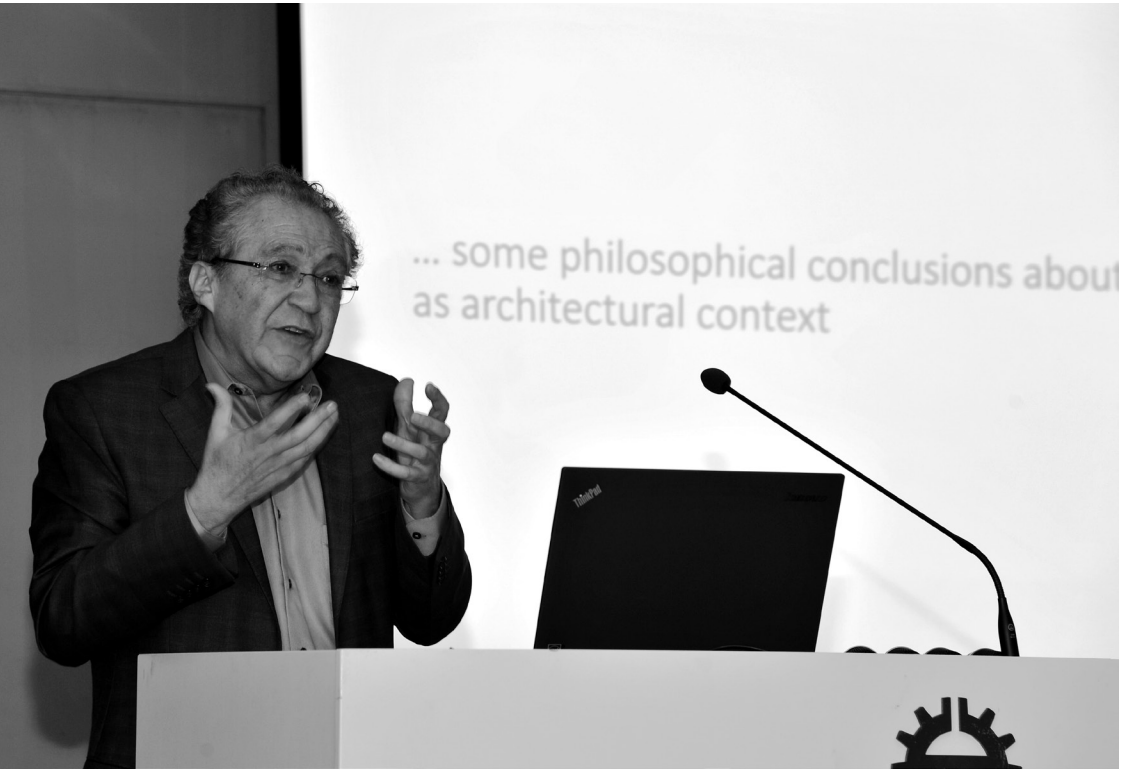
8. Levinas makes the claim specifically against Heidegger. Emmanuel Levinas, "Heidegger, Gagarin, and Us", *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, trans. Seán Hand (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), pp.231-234.

9. A strand elaborated upon by Colin St. John Wilson in *The Other Tradition of Modern Architecture: The Uncompleted Project* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2007).

10. See Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (Chichester: Wiley-Academy, 3rd edn., 2005), for a now-classic analysis of architecture's visual prejudices and the broader sensory engagement that is properly a part of architectural practice.

11. Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1994).

The ideas in this paper draw heavily on my work previously published elsewhere, most notably in *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999 – and in a second revised and expanded edition published by Routledge in 2018), and also in many other books and papers. See also, among recent works: "Five theses on place (and some associated remarks). A reply to Peter Gratton", *Il Cannocchiale*, 42, nos.1-2 (2017), pp. 69-81; "Self, Other, Thing: Triangulation and Topography in Post-Kantian Philosophy", *Philosophy Today*, 59 (2015), pp.103–126; "Putting Space in Place: Relational Geography and Philosophical Topography", *Planning and Environment D: Space and Society*, 30 (2012), pp.226-242; "Rethinking Dwelling: Heidegger and the Question of Place", *Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology Newsletter*, 25 (Winter, 2014), pp.15-23; "Building Memory", *Interstices: Journal of Architecture and Related Arts* 13 (2012), pp.11-21.



EMERGING PLACE IN CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE: THE PROBLEM OF CONTEXT IN A COSMOPOLITAN WORLD

Alberto Pérez-Gómez

I wish to enter into a consideration of *emerging place* in contemporary architecture by revisiting Christian Norberg-Schulz's use of the concept of *genius loci* in the 1970's and 80's. His contribution was significant in the wake of modernism, particularly in foregrounding the limitations and fallacies of the so-called international style, so detrimental in its homogenization of cities and suburbia – veritable "no-places" that grew like mushrooms all over the world. The "spirit of place" was a crucial concept for Norberg-Schulz during the 70's and in his later work, its identification in historical contexts a proof of architecture's potential for meaning. In his 1976 book *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*, he writes: "The existential purpose of the building (architecture) is … to make a site become a place, that is, to uncover the meanings potentially present in a given environment." Or more specifically: "Prague… *seizes you* and remains with you as hardly any other place… this *closeness of the earth*… The strength of Prague as a place depends, first of all, on the *felt presence* of the 'genius loci' throughout."[1]

The acknowledgement of "genius loci" came to stand for an appropriate identification of a context's identity, as a setting and point of departure for meaningful contemporary design practices. In seeking to transform the awareness of a place's spirit into a productive point of departure for architecture, we must nevertheless ask how this meaning is actually given.

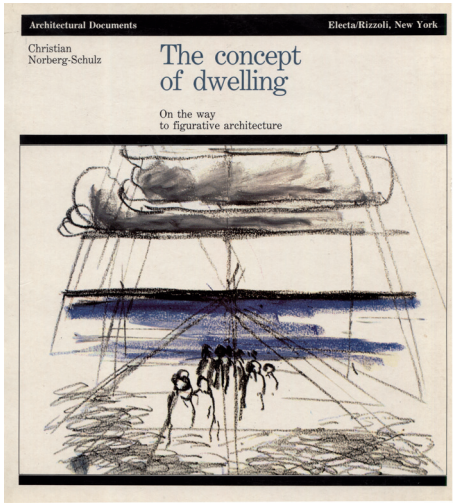


Fig. 1. Cover of *The Concept of Dwelling* by Christian Norberg-Schulz (1985).

Fig. 2. Piazza d'Italia in New Orleans, U.S.A., by Charles Moore (1990).

Norberg-Schulz's language is unquestionably moving and evocative of experience. In his books, however, this "spirit of place" is deliberately transmitted to the reader through black and white (and later color) photographs, carefully framed and edited, conveying the sense of a graspable, object-like figure. Does *genius loci* manifest identity, as Norberg-Schulz often claimed? Is it necessarily the embodiment of a tradition that may be alien to a newly arrived immigrant in a modern metropolis? Is it objective, like a picture? Is it transparent in its representation, like the photographs in the book *Genius Loci* seem to suggest?

The concept of *genius loci* was openly embraced by postmodern architects in the 1980's albeit with dubious results. If the *place* could be grasped as a "figure" and represented as a picture, then it seemed obvious to claim that its *genius loci* could be simulated, as in, for example, Charles Moore's Piazza d'Italia in New Orleans. This urban project, which used the imagery of Italian public spaces and inserted them into a completely different urban context in New Orleans, has remained problematic and practically ignored by the inhabitants of the city since its inception. While it has been recently restored to its bright colors, recalling Moore's declared admiration for Disneyland (and the alternative of simulated "public" space over autochthonous place), it has consistently failed in its aim to revitalize downtown New Orleans. Today we perceive it as an irrelevant if playful pastiche of classical allusions. At the root of its failure is the fallacy of place as image, a fallacy that led Norberg-Schulz to write in 1984: "A new public architecture is thus on the way, as is for instance proved by the recent works of Michael Graves [alluding to the Portland Building]. Here archetypal forms reappear in new interpretations and combinations, offering the promise of an authentic figurative architecture… What we need today is a return to the 'powerful figures that build the world.'"[2]

In the wake of such problematic outcomes, it is important to ask again how can architecture and urban form more authentically acknowledge the specific cultural particularities that we experience as the identity of a place. The failure of postmodernism and its outdated semiotic and symbolic presumptions led to a reaction, now exemplified by the new avant-garde, and to statements such as those of Rem Koolhaas, who has claimed that such connections between identity and place are more or less a delusion. Since the strategies of postmodernism failed, does this mean instead that anything goes? Does this give license to "starchitects" to build branded projects anywhere in the world, regardless of cultural milieu? This is evidently a central question for an ethical contemporary architecture that respects and embraces cultural differences. In my view, the question is crucial, but inherently ambiguous. For instance, one must admit that artistic products from the most diverse cultures have the capacity to touch us emotionally and edify us by virtue of their paradoxical universality; they both belong to a time and place and transcend it, contributing to human self-understanding. Thus, contrary to what many architects and critical theorists may think, contextualism is not an obvious operation, particularly when one may recognize that what is at stake is not the production of novel objects but the design of attuned atmospheres for diverse cultural habits and practices.[3]

The difficulties around this question, as evident in contemporary architectural practices, are a direct result of a typically modern cultural dilemma: imagining and building meaningful spatial environments for a globalized world civilization that, regardless of geographical location, remains in the grip of Cartesian dualism. This particular (and dated) articulation of reality is oftentimes identified with "common sense." Descartes believed that in order to bridge the divide between the human mind and the world, our vision should depend upon precise

perspectival pictures. Thus, geometrical perspective was identified with the truth of the world. All other sensory dimensions were potential distractions or ruses. Martin Heidegger argued that this reduction of reality to a perspectival picture in fact revealed an inherent incapacity to perceive the "context" of objects; it ignored the Aristotelian insight that when an object changes place, this positional change effectively and truly modifies its being. This visual manifestation of the technological mentality posed the gravest dangers to the world, reducing it to pictures, and thus bringing about the hegemony of the image. Descartes' dualistic world has made the global village possible, one in which concepts of reality and delusions of progress are fueled by the evident successes of technology in controlling and dominating the environment. In this predominantly *scientistic* world, the great majority of building reflects little else but the enshrined, supposedly objective and hedonistic values of economy and efficiency. Such architecture instantiates, like a signpost, monetary and political power.

In order to design and build a poetic world both grounded in a culture and also transcending it, a world that may enable humans to participate in a sense of meaning without reducing buildings to literal signs, we must question certain deep-rooted assumptions. First of all, architecture is not the mere manipulation of form or space. Furthermore, it is neither an art nor a science in the reduced sense that contemporary civilization usually attributes to both terms. If we understand architecture as either contingent, mostly superfluous ornamentation or applied technology, we will never grasp what belongs to a site, or what is appropriate to the given set of focal actions to which architecture must give place – that which we call the architectural program. The ultimate relativity of value is insurmountable if architecture is reduced to a question of "esthetics" (in the eighteenth-century sense), "ornament" or style (in the nineteenth-century sense). Positions for and

against the importance and precedence of a given cultural milieu are equally false if one understands such a milieu as a picture, or as a materialistic, dead, and objectified collection of physical features or buildings. Such a "context" can never be the origin for the generation of meaningful architectural ideas and built works.

Today one sometimes finds instances of a desire to relate the typology and formal configuration of recent urban architecture either to the landscape or to one specific historical tradition, producing more cohesive ensembles that resemble traditional cityscapes. Taking into account the physical traces of tradition is often laudable, also as a reaction to the banality of technological modernism. It is evident that architectural interventions which respect historical traces tend to result in richer and more interesting projects. This attitude is still an echo of the call that was articulated by Norberg-Schulz when he wrote: "Even in our 'global' epoch, the spirit of place remains a reality. Human identity presupposes the identity of place, and the *genius loci* therefore ought to be understood and preserved."[4] "Context" understood as an objectified, picture-like, formal syntax, in the sense sketched above, however, is far from a synonym of either nature or cultural heritage, and ultimately cannot be a point of departure for a more rooted architecture. It is important to emphasize that even Heidegger, usually identified with the conservative impulse toward rootedness and stable identity that characterizes Norberg-Schulz's works – and often quoted in his books as his main source – insisted in his late works on the transitory character of life and cultural worlds, arguing that we continually remain within homelessness and attempted homecoming.[5]

To grasp the significance of both our given natural world and our histories as the ground for a distinct architecture, we must understand these phenomena as interwoven, only graspable through narratives, which also enable our self-understanding as modern architects. This hermeneutic imagination is indeed the only sure foundation that may allow the architect to articulate a project as a political position, following an understanding of what may be appropriate here and now. Stories are thus crucial for an ethical praxis, for a design professional to state where he or she stands. Key to this problem is the issue of language. Language, enabling a proper understanding of the comprehensive circumstances of a project, including the client's values, cultural assumptions and the meanings present in places, is crucial for a poetic and ethical architectural practice.[6] As it has been argued by philosophers like Paul Ricoeur, Richard Kearney and Evan Thompson, language is the substance of the imagination, and the crucial foundation for constructing the commonplace – an insight now corroborated by experimental neuroscience.[7] Language is the basis of *phronésis* or prudence, the practical philosophy of Aristotle, the ground of culture that is also the ground of truly relevant human truths, including the good and the beautiful. The nature of such truths is unlike the "truth as correspondence" of mathematics, however, and closer to the Heideggerian concept of *alétheia*, an event of *unconcealment* in the lived present. Contemporary architects have the unfortunate tendency to bypass language during the design process, believing that the imagination, creativity, and the project – identified with picture-making – can occupy some universal realm that allows for ubiquity. In this way, we may feel we are perfectly capable of designing in New York a school for Uganda, for example, fulfilling an abstract brief provided by a client, for seemingly what matters is an international language of forms, made possible by universal technological means.

History and "context" are never simply given, like unchanging objects; we have to make them at every moment because understanding is interpretation, and our conceptual

skills and background are very much part of our perception, which is never passive. We weave history and "context" in the present through our own desire, and we must do this with humility, in an exchange with the culture in which we expect to build. Genuine dialogue, a confluence of horizons, is paramount. Only when emerging from the deeply rooted language of a particular culture can an appropriate position be formulated, resulting in a program and, eventually, an appropriate architectural project. As Nietzsche has suggested, history is the most authentic knowledge we possess if we wish to act creatively, to take a position and make a promise – a project – that contributes positively to others' present and future life.[8] History is our full inheritance: it comprises both the constitution of the mental framework that has its roots in the Western tradition (for the contemporary technological world is constituted out of that tradition), and local architectural artifacts that are cultural symbols made by others and responding to genuine, fundamental human questions, kindred to our own, artifacts through which we can glean an order allowing our present orientation. We should seek basic strategies for poetic inhabitation in the artifacts, history and fictions that constitute our background and inheritance, and which have the capacity to move us both emotionally and cognitively.

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Let me foreground, through a few examples, some aspects of experience that emerge from a phenomenological appreciation of context. It has been observed that the perception of invariant colors and dimensions in the empirical world is bound to specific cultures through language. The Inuit in the polar desert, for example, perceive many colors where we see only white. Yet the perception of invariance, however it may

occur, is a secondary phenomenon, while the flow of experience itself is primary. Pure red or pure white are never empirical facts in our perceptual experience; they always appear situated, as qualities of particular phenomena, in a field, and under a certain light. Similarly, a vertical dimension is always perceived as larger than the horizontal dimension of the same quantitative extension. This is not an optical illusion. We will invariably overestimate the horizontal distance a falling tower may reach, because vertical distance is, in the first instance, greater than horizontal distance. What we perceive as primary is always elastic: time and distance depending, for instance, on whether we go home from the office riding a bicycle or by car, and depending on whether we are hungry or bored. The mileage reading in the car odometer is, in this sense, a secondary abstraction.

Turning now to architecture and thinking, for example, about St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, we may choose to objectify it as art historians often do, and state that its proportions are actually awkward and squat, ignoring that Bernini's oval pi-

Fig. 3. Basilica of Saint Peter's, Rome, Italy.

azza makes it look right. Such intellectualizing objectifications of architecture constitute a dangerous fallacy. Notice that the objectified, context-less building is taken as the real building, allowing the critic to utter such a scathing judgment. St. Peter's Basilica is what it is in its existing site. The work never exists outside or apart from its context, even though we may wish to consider it as an autonomous geometrical object in the Cartesian space of our mind. Furthermore, the context that contributes so much to its identity is never purely the objectified, measurable site either. The site has a site; it is perceived through the body whose awareness always includes pre-reflective consciousness.

Thus, we must conclude that context is indeed crucial for architectural meaning, yet also must be understood in its more encompassing sense as situation or ground, or even as the "world of the work." It also follows that the issue of the generation of appropriate architectural ideas in an urban site or region of the modern world is a complex problem that depends on the proper working of the imagination, reconciling what is given with what is possible in order to open up the possibility of poetic dwelling – which necessarily involves a narrative of future life in the given place. It is therefore an issue of metaphoricity: it necessitates rhetorical and political thinking rather than instrumental or stylistic deduction. Only an architect with a broad understanding of culture and the humanities is liable to succeed in this task. As we well know, these are conditions that unfortunately do not respond to the pedagogical priorities of contemporary architecture schools and professional corporations.

The modern world has a specific reality that is not independent from our consciousness. The world itself is an intentional phenomenon, and our place in history (as modern humans) demands that our actions not become curtailed by a reactionary enslavement within prevailing traditions when

these become empty of content. Heidegger – who helped establish the phenomenological awareness at the root of my previous remarks about the importance of the site as place – indeed writes: "The flight into tradition, out of a combination of humility and prescription, can bring about nothing in itself other than self-deception and blindness in relation to the historical moment."[9]

Architectural historians have contributed to a delusion when they falsely try to explain the development of architecture as progressive organic change. The great architecture that we now perceive as our tradition is in fact the work of enlightened individuals whose highly personal and imaginative syntheses were never "contextual" in the modern, narrow sense of the word. These works were at the leading edge of culture at the time they were created. They fit into the culture and the natural environment not because they were "formally coherent" but rather because their identity – that which they represented, and that allowed their builders and inhabitants a deep sense of recognition – was the result of the individual architect's broad and deep cultural roots in his or her own space and time. This lies at the heart of architectural meaning, always perceived as both new and familiar, enabling the participatory role of architecture.

Our traditional sense of place or *locus* has been disrupted by our belief that technological, isotropic, geometric space can be the real domain of our worldly actions.[10] Jeff Malpas grants that while place is fundamental, and primary to existence, it has been occulted by our concepts of geometric space.[11] Our age supports an almost blind faith in applied science, one that has become increasingly international and transcultural, fueled by ever more efficient systems of communication and information, blurring traditional boundaries and, with them, blurring the qualities of specific places that may still be present in everyday modern life. This is a reality that must be acknowl-

edged by architects and urban designers alike. The *recovery of place is a critical project*. It is not enough to look out at the world or region transformed into a picture: cultural values and relations to place must be sought in architecture through a personal search, a work of the ethical imagination and not of pastiche or statistics. To expect that one can isolate regional or cultural formal characteristics and reflect them in architecture though a conscious, externalized operation is naïve. Equally futile is the desire to recreate nostalgic "urban public space:" a parallelogram with four little trees does not make a *plaza*. Postmodern simulations are not the modern equivalent of the *locus* where traditional architecture fulfilled its intersubjective, cultural promise to become a cosmic space, offering through experiential wonder a ground and orientation to our finite lives. This kind of contextualism, regionalism or even revivalism has clearly failed to produce truly meaningful architecture, even when it rivals the surrogate forms of cultural participation represented by the media, cyberspace or television.

What, then, are our most fruitful alternatives? From the historical trajectory of modernity, we have also inherited a very real capacity for reaction and personal reconciliation. The history of this alternative poetic epistemology started with the inception of the Romantic Movement and continued in the twentieth century, mainly through surrealism and phenomenology. If we aim to make architecture with a desire to acknowledge local identity, we must recognize the priority of embodiment and our connections to the natural world; and yet neither the world nor the body are simply given unmediated, as a permanent and unchanging essence. Our conceptual skills can actually modify our perceptions, enriching or impoverishing them. Meditating upon an artificial lake created by planners in the center of Dallas, Texas, Ivan Illich demonstrates how difficult it is for H_2O – a modern "liquid molecule" whose mechanical circulatory natural properties have been

observed and assumed since the late eighteenth century – to appear in our contemporary experience as elemental *water*, as the mythical liquid that not only makes biological life possible, but allows for remembering and forgetting, enabling the healthy functioning of the human spirit. While it is important to conserve H_2O, to reduce waste and procure the amounts needed for practical purposes, it is even more fundamental to remember that its emotional value is crucial to our psychosomatic health, and can only be recovered through imaginative artistic work, displacement and metaphor.

We have been severed from our traditions, and an architecture capable of disclosing *places* can not be the outcome of a simple-minded extrapolation from historical or autochthonous, vernacular buildings. The theory of functionalism obviously failed, becoming prey to its own reductionist obsessions, multiplying civilization's sense of placelessness. In reaction, artistically minded architects have produced self-referential, top-down formalist buildings that presume to create meaning out of themselves, also failing to acknowledge the precedence of place. And yet, true modern architecture has been produced that is not identical to technological building or indulgent egocentric practices. The modern epoch has created architecture with unquestionable emotional meaning, capable of disclosing emerging places, and it is all diverse and heterogeneous; from Gaudì's Casa Milà to Aalto's Paimio Sanatorium or Villa Mairea, from Mies's Barcelona Pavilion to Le Corbusier's La Tourette or Ronchamp. Regardless of its "style" or more or less figural or abstract quality, such architecture allows for cultural recognition; it creates atmospheres that welcome *our* dreams, it represents *our* values in a mode ultimately irreducible to paraphrase. Contrary to common assumptions, this architecture is profoundly meaningful precisely because it does not have *a* meaning, like the logo of a company or a false idol, and opposes all strong dogmatic and ideological reduc-

tions. Perhaps we should emphasize this further: Barragan's architecture does not represent "Mexico" as a nation-state. The same could be said for Aalto and Finland, or Le Corbusier and France. This coupling is one of the most problematic misunderstandings of regionalism. As Giorgio Agamben has clearly explained, nation-states are modern fabrications often held together by police control.[12] True architecture always overwhelms its simple function as a sign and plays with power; this is why it is crucial for humanity's survival.

We expect to be at home in our cities, to share a sense of existential, and not merely physical, security. Yet our collective home must accept a dimension of utopia, one that accompanies the true values of modernity, that is, the possibility of real historical evolution and our self-assertion as individuals, leaving behind the repugnant prejudices of the past and transcending both totalitarianism and anarchy. We must therefore embrace the positive aspects of utopia, the possibility of a better future, while remaining open to the gifts of our cultural region, particularly as made manifest in artifacts of many kinds, literary and artistic. It is my contention that within this tradition of poetic artifacts in different media we may find appropriate strategies to be internalized and tested by the architect. Abstract architectural ideas evidently pose a danger of being easy to assimilate to the aims of technological domination. The power of the modern architect as a maker, however, should not be denied. The great works of modern architecture, even though they are in the world and belong to culture, like gestures or food, are comparatively free from the traditional limitations and associations of the specific site. This does not mean that these works simply ignore their place; on the contrary, *when successful, architecture unveils the sense of place and returns it to us as that which has always been given, as the gift itself.* Only by acknowledging this difficulty will we be able to transcend the danger of solipsism and irrelevance

Fig. 4. Interior of the Holy Shroud Chapel, Turin Cathedral, Italy; an example of invention through the hermeneutic imagination, both responding to site and program.

in architectural practice.

Let me reiterate, there is obviously no creation *ex nihilo.* Phenomenology proclaims that the world co-emerges with consciousness and gives it its meanings. In this sense the artist reveals the unnameable through the poetic image, the invisible and concealed deep reality of our human world. Since perception is action and is never passive, the inveterate dualistic distinction between nature and culture is ambivalent. The structure of "ground, sky, and horizon" to which the poet and architect must allude is always present, yet in our technological world *place* can no longer be simply disclosed through a mimetic imagination: it has to be produced through a hermeneutic one.[13] This operation is first gestural and linguistic, even dramatic, rather than simply a question of pictures.

To repeat, suggesting that we can recognize purely material qualities – typological, topological, or morphological – at each one of the different scales addressed by the planner or architect, in order to build a figural building or city in a supposedly identifiable "place" with its particular *genius loci,* is a delusion. It is a delusion that can be particularly dangerous when extrapolated to the political realm. In a world where we are called to live with others, hoping to preserve our own autochthonous cultures but remaining open to newcomers, it is indeed of the essence to understand that cultural identity is *fundamentally* impossible to objectify. It does not live through signs, like swastikas or crucifixes, but through open symbolic artifacts and actions more akin to Byzantine icons than to pagan idols, allowing meanings "through" without circumscribing them. *Dwelling* in the early third millennium demands a reinvention of the ground of architecture by identifying first our renewed, non-Cartesian body image and its particular and necessarily fragmented recollection of Being. Through an introspective search, in the form of self-knowledge *through making*, the architect can then expect to generate an

order appropriate to the task and site. The search is a personal one and, in this sense, is intimately related to the search of the painter, the writer, or the musician: a search always oriented by a historical sense, by the identification of a founding tradition. As in Mark Rothko's dark canvases in Houston, Texas, the embodiment of the archetypal landscape is today perhaps closer to the universal than, say, in the works of an eighteenth-century painter, yet it remains uniquely concrete, immediately transformative, and equally impossible to paraphrase.

To conclude, let me briefly return to the crucial role of language in all of this. The language of metaphor, of course, as a language "against" the conventional denotative function of prose, is capable of expressing for us the character of a place, a city or a region. But also the language of stories is capable of articulating ways of life, relationships, modes of engagement, and most importantly, ethical issues. These are the stories of the traditional dwellers, of the historical dwellers, and of the future dwellers, eventually taking the form of the programs architects and urban designers put forward for new modes of collective participation in the city of the future. This latter use of language is part of the architectural and urban project, as important I would argue as the drawings that may give it form, and it has precedents in the early modern works of Ledoux and Lequeu. This language is expressive, not algorithmic; it is not about functions but offers a vision of a poetic life, for an idealized client, one that is thus related to its context. It is the language of the humanities and not hard science. It is deliberately a narrative language, keeping in mind Maurice Merleau-Ponty's observation that our fixation with calculation and universal language is a sure way to kill true language and human expression. The program for the new city respectful of cultural identity is a promise, and must be a promise of beauty *and* justice – terms that, as Elaine Scarry has shown, point to the same value rather than being antithetical.[14] It

is a promise born from the architect's responsible, personal imagination, through compassion for the other, as a project for the common good.[15]

Endnotes

1. Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1976), pp. 78-81.

2. Christian Norberg-Schulz, *The Concept of Dwelling: On the Way to Figurative Architecture* (New York: Electa/Rizzoli, 1985), p. 88.

3. This is the topic of my recent book. See Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Attunement: Architectural Meaning after the Crisis of Modern Science* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2016).

4. Norberg-Schulz, *The Concept of Dwelling*, op. cit., p. 70.

5. Robert Mugerauer analyzes 77 of Heidegger's late works (from the 1940's to the 1970's) in *Heidegger and Homecoming: The Leitmotif in Later Writings* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008). He concludes that Heidegger's final works, often unknown outside local audiences, "describe how one recognizes the meaning of a life-world's surroundings and internalizes what is given as one's own in a manner that can accommodate disturbing forces from the outside."

6. For further elaboration, see Pérez-Gómez, *Attunement*, op. cit., pp. 165-96

7. See Paul Ricoeur, "The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality," *Man and World* 12, 1979, pp. 123-141; Richard Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination* (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1988); Evan Thompson, *Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology and the Science of the Mind* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 278-9.

8. Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," in *Untimely Meditations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

9. Martin Heidegger, "The Age of the World-Picture," in *The Question Concerning Technology* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1977), p. 136.

10. For further elaboration, see Pérez-Gómez, *Attunement*, op. cit., ch. 4, pp. 107-38.

11. Jeff Malpas, *Place and Experience. A Philosophical Topography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

12. See, for example, Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

13. For an analysis of the historical modalities of the imagination, see: Richard Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination*, op. cit. and *The Poetics of Imagining: From Husserl to Lyotard* (London: Harper Collins, 1991).

14. See Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

15. For further elaboration, see Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Built upon Love: Architectural Longing after Ethics and Aesthetics* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2006).

PLACING THE MIND: EXISTENTIAL MEANING IN ARCHITECTURE

Juhani Pallasmaa

> "In the fusion of place and soul, the soul is as much of a container of place as place is a container of soul, and both are susceptible to the same forces of destruction."[1]
> (Robert Pogue Harrison)

*

Writers and lecturers sometimes begin their presentations with an etymology of the essential words of their theme. I will not attempt to cite the etymological echoes of "place" in a Heideggerian manner. Instead, I wish to suggest that although "place" is linguistically a noun, it seems to possess hidden adjective and verb connotations. Places arise through qualitative distinctions in relation to the larger context and other places, and this differentiation suggests a hidden adjective reading. Places also structure, direct and tune our perceptions and they condition our behaviour; thus, this noun-word also contains verb-like potential. John Dewey suggests that "mind is primarily a verb."[2] I will attempt to open up the phenomenon of place especially from a biological and evolutionary perspective.

Permit me to begin my essay with two concrete examples, firstly a personal experience of placing myself in the placeless snow of a northern Lapland wilderness, and secondly, an antropological example from the Africa of turning the placeless world of the desert into an organized cosmos, and thus relating the tribe to the world and marking its place on earth.

The Emergence of Place

The notions of place and placing have two connotations; the first task is to define man's place in the cosmic context and, second, to concretize the location of his body and mind within the settings of life. The first place is metaphysical, the second is related with the reality of our lifeworld. Aristotle's argument that "Nothing is that is not placed"[3] makes "place" an unavoidable condition for anything to exist, but "placeness" also implies a distinct human experiential quality through which we structure and organize our lifeworld and concretize experientially its qualitative articulation. The latter meaning of "placeness" projects biological and human meanings.

A decade ago on a winter skiing and fishing trip in the snowy fields of northern Lapland my wife, I and another couple were only an hour short of the Arctic Ocean. One day we decided to ski to a lake a few kilometers away from our rented log cabin, to fish through the meter-thick ice. As we were approaching the lake in deep snow, a fierce storm suddenly broke out, and we dug quickly a circular pit, two meters in diameter, in the snow, all the way to the solid ground, to be able to set a fire of dry branches and protect ourselves from the deadly wind. Initially, we had only survival in our minds, but hidden meanings of place emerged (Fig. 1).

Once we had managed to light the fire it gave us protection, but the smoke created a column that suggested the *axis mundi*, connecting our most primal earthly place with the cosmos and marking our location in the world that otherwise lacked all sense of location and direction.

This vertical column also suggests the realms of "divinities" and "mortals" in the manner of Heidegger's categories. I recalled that Vitruvius connected the emergence of architecture with the taming of fire. The four of us around the fire naturally marked a square and the suggestion of basic orientation. I

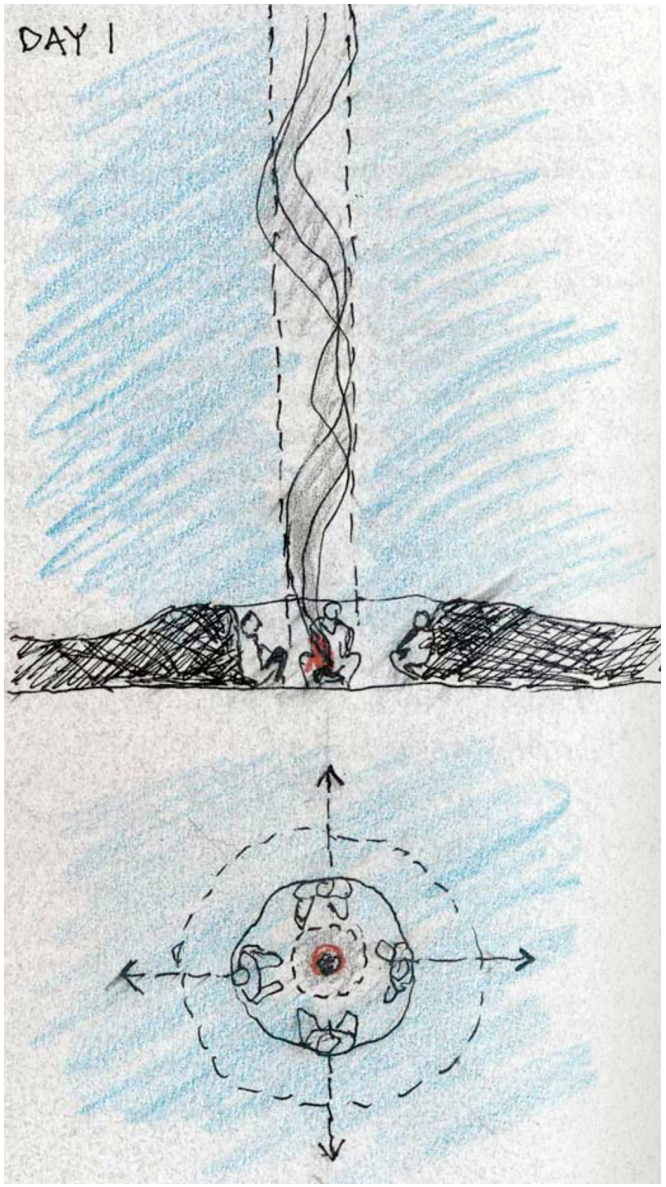

Fig 1. "DAY 1"; Diagram of an emergency wilderness shelter dug in the snow, Lapland.

remembered the mythical rite of the founding of Rome. With a plough, pulled by two oxen, Romulus ploughed a circular ditch around the future town, and lifting the plough interrupted the continuity of the ditch at four points, to provide points of entry and orientation. A square in a circle is also the basic structure of the Mandala, and in my view, true buildings are always spatial mandalas, constructions that seek interpretations and project meanings. Additionally, squaring the circle was one of the intellectual challenges of the alchemists.

After three hours, the wind settled enough for us to ski back to our cabin. The next day we returned to the same lake and passed our former camp site, but the wind had already filled up the pit and we could barely recognize a vague circle in the snow. Yet, as we skied past the barely distinguishable circle, we all felt warmth and familiarity. "We are back home," we all sighed gratefully. We had already been emotionally attached to our temporary domicile.

This is an example of the magic power of architecture, but it also exemplifies the making of a place, which arises from an interaction of material, spatial, mental and experiential factors. We had unintentionally performed a founding ritual, and that ritual gave meaning to our experience. The extraordinary sense of homecoming that we sensed was not the circle in the snow, the pit, or the fire, but their experiential interaction with our mental and emotive world. Places are not merely geographic, geometric or formal entities, for they are, moreover, experiences and lived processes with which we identify ourselves and to which we consciously and unconsciously project specific meanings. Places are relational experiences; they are experiences of the self and the place at the same time – authentic places do not exist without the subject. They are simultaneous experiences of distinct physical situations and mental states. The social meaning and the cosmic order are established simultaneously.

Architecture is usually regarded as the production of material buildings with distinct visual aspirations and qualities, such as spatial and proportional compositions, and buildings are analysed and evaluated as functional, tectonic and aesthetic entities. However, the essence of architecture is manifested as experiential properties, qualities, intentions and existential meanings. The ontological meaning of architecture is traditionally seen as construction that provides shelter from a hostile climate and enemies; indeed, this is the utilitarian or functional origin of architecture. But architecture also has another originary beginning; architecture mediates between the threatening immensity of the world, the infinity and anonymity of space, and the endlessness of time. This is the cognitive and mental origin of architecture. From its very origin, architecture has mediated between the world, the divinities and the mortals, and projected predictable order and meaning into human existence.

Architecture mediates between the physical and the mental worlds; it gives us the basic existential orientations and measures; it places, concretizes and contextualizes human existence. We create spaces and places, existential footholds in the meaningless world through our constructions, both material and mental, practical and metaphysical. To paraphrase a notion of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, architecture places us in "the flesh of the world."[4] Through creating distinct places, architectural structures defend and support us in the physical world, but equally importantly they also project and maintain existential order and meaning; they help us to remember and understand who we are.

Buildings are our guides, interpreters, and both bodily and mental extentions in the world. In his book *The Extended Phenotype*,[5] Richard Dawkins suggests that the physical constructions, nests and other devices of animals, such as the water regulation systems of beavers, should be included in

the biological definition of the species in question. Architecture and other human constructions, material and mental, such as the networks of countless places, should similarly be seen as extensions of *Homo Sapiens*. Architecture situates and places us in the world, and it also directs and coordinates our observations and understanding and orients our thoughts. A place is a multi-sensory and multi-dimensional experience and judgement, and the inherent irreconcilability of its "ingredients" cannot be objectively described or designed; it can only be experientially felt, imagined and mentally simulated.

Settlement Form as World Picture: The Human Landscape

My second example concerns the settlement form of the Rendile tribe in Kenya. The Rendile are nomads, who keep moving in the desert on their endless journey every day, and each night they re-erect their settlement. The elements of the circular leather huts, supported by lightweight wooden frames, are transported on camels. As they arrive at the next night's location, the women erect the circular huts in the overall shape of a circle with a larger spacing towards the orientation where the sun will rise the next morning (Fig. 2). The chief's hut is erected opposite the sun, whereas the doors of all the other huts are oriented towards the center of the community. Thus, the orientations of the ordinary huts point at the center of the community, whereas the chief's hut is oriented towards the deity.

The Rendile live in the unstructured desert without directions, but they carry the organization of the world in their collective mind and every single evening they re-construct the image of the cosmos, as well as their own communal order and hierarchy.

The originary purpose of architecture was to relate us with the immensity of our experiential and imaginative world.

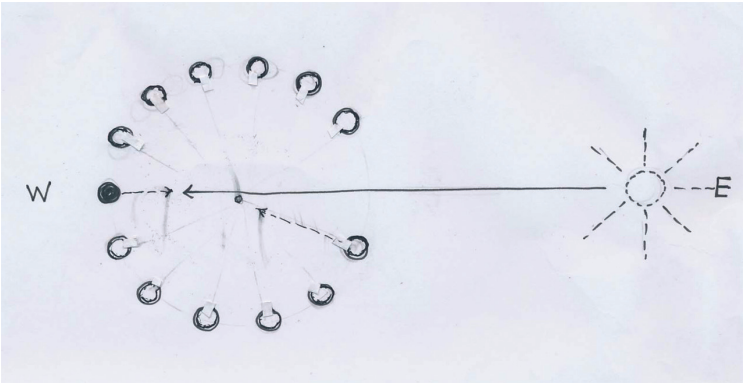

Fig. 2. Diagram of a Rendile nomadic tribe's temporary settlement, Kenya.

Buildings created the mediating measure and system of giving a scale, and relating the nucleus of the self with the world by their inherent systems of harmony. This is a story that Alberto Pérez-Gómez develops with historical and philosophical expertise in his recent book *Attunement* (2016).[6] In our utilitarian, technological and quasi-rational world, architecture has given up its seminal mediating role of tuning, scaling, relating and mediating, and reduced itself to isolated functionalized and aestheticized spaces and objects.

Articulating the landscape or the countless situations of life into a system of chained and interlocking systems of places, specific spatial units of varying sizes, shapes, materials and meanings make our experiential and lived world graspable, memorizeable and meaningful. It is evident that the experience of place is our prereflective and preconscious manner of projecting organization and meaning into the world around us. This meaning arises from synthetic, sensory and embodied recognition of the "usefullness" of a spatial environmental situation for our survival and wellbeing. Undoubtedly even animals, from insects to primates, have a sense of place and they behave accordingly. They know how to minimize dan-

ger and maximize the prospect of protection, food, mating and procreation by choosing appropriate places. We humans "understand" places unconsciously and qualities of places synthetically before we have had any chance for intellectual speculation or understanding. As Robert Pogue Harrison suggests, in the epigraph for this essay, places become part of our way of being through a curious mental exchange: the place accepts me, while I fully internalize the place as part of my experience of being.

One can feel non-placed or displaced in the desert, in the thick of a forest when you are lost, but also in the non-hierarchical contemporary non-city. For me, the contemporary city of Doha in Qatar has been such an unexpected spatial experience: you do not experience any street, any street corner or any square as a distinct meaningful space that could place you in the urban continuum; the city is just an exhibition of detached buildings by some of the most celebrated architects of today, but these structures do not constitute a sense of a city with an experiential cohesion and behavioral meanings. Besides, the time dimension is also entirely lost and you only experience a flattened sense of nowness, almost as living in a stopped film frame.

Non-Place and Existential Outsideness

We cannot mentally live in a uniform and meaningless world, a "non-place," to use a notion of Edward Relph. He has another notion, which I find at the same time illuminating and alarming, "existential outsideness."[7] This is a situation in which one feels constantly an outsider, who has no experience of place or belonging anywhere. This is today's mode of growing existential homelessness, the mental inability to dwell and sense oneself placed. But we cannot live in a measureless and infinite time, either. As architects we usually understand the

mental need for the perceptual, mental and cultural structuring and articulation of "natural," or physical space, but we are not equally conscious of our mental need to place ourselves in the endless flow of time, and to establish our place in time. Karsten Harries writes almost shockingly of "the terror of time,"[8] that we need to protect ourselves from and that takes place mainly through our constructions, both physical and mental. We surely need to feel placed also in time. We need to locate ourselves in place or, as mentioned earlier using a notion from Merleau-Ponty, in "the flesh of the world."[9] The modern man is torn by the conflicting desires to see himself as a distinct, independant and autonomous individual, and at the same time to long for attachment and belonging.

We are related with the entire world that we are conscious of, and even the universe through the capacities of our minds, sensory systems and imagination – what else is our imagination than a capacity to go beyond the reach of our senses? We are even related to the dizzying entirety of the universe, and the complexity of multiverses, beyond human observation and understanding suggested by today's science. Merleau-Ponty describes this mode of human existence with a beautiful analogy: "Our body is in the world as the heart is in the organism; it keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive, it breaths life into it and sustains it inwardly , and with it forms a system."[10] The philosopher's statement forcefully ties the existence and experience of the self indivisibly with the experience of the world, and describes this fusion with the metaphor of an organism. Instead of the phrasing the "visible spectacle," I would rather say the "embodied spectacle," as we sense our being in the world through our existential sense rather than mere vision.

I believe that even in architecture our most important sense is the sense of self and existence, as it is this very sense that fuses the multitude of stimuli into a singular experience. In another context, Merleau-Ponty describes our sensory and

experiential world with similarly synthetic terms: "My perception is not a sum of visual, tactile and auditive givens: I perceive in a total way with my whole being: I grasp the unique structure of the things, a unique way of being, which speaks to all my senses at once."[11] It is this simultaneity and constantly meshing relatedness of things in lived life that we do not usually consciously grasp. Yet, as he also argues, "We come not to see the work of art, but the world according to the work."[12] This observation also applies fully in architecture; we do not come to see the architectural work itself, but to experience our being in the world and ourselves as mediated and articulated by the piece of architecture. Architecture structures our being in the world in specific ways and projects distincts meanings on our sense of existence. As Gaston Bachelard argues: "[…] the house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind."[13] Places also have similar powers of integration as houses and, in a way, places are mentally embryos of dwellings.

One of the situational dualities that is fundamental for our pleasure or balanced environment is the duality of "refuge" and "prospect," the simultaneity of a place of protection and observation. This is an understanding brought to us by the new science of ecological psychology. The theory of this polarity has been convincingly applied by Grant Hildebrandt to explain the psychological success of Frank Lloyd Wright's houses,[14] but also one of today's most significant ecological architects, Glenn Murcutt, uses these polar terms repeatedly in his lectures. In fact, the asymetrical sections of his houses, which perform as climatic instruments, are graphic representations of "refuse" and "prospect," the two significant criteria of domestic placeness.

Experiencing Place

The components or ingredients of place are usually far too complex, too multi-sensory and too unconscious to be rationally analysed; places are felt, enjoyed or feared, before they can be understood. Place is not a geographic, spatial, formal or material thing; it is a human experience of "placeness" and "placedness" in the way that artistic and architectural works are fundamentally experiences. John Dewey argues: "By common consent, the Parthenon is a great work of art. Yet, it has esthetic standing only as the work becomes an experience for a human being […] Art is always the product in experience of an interaction of human beings with their environment."[15]

The experience of placeness can similarly arise from countless characteristics and features, but fundamentally, it is a consequence of experiential cohesion, spatial or formal singularity, communal agreement, or meaningfulness of a distict entity in the physical world. Thus, place is fundamentally a mental quality, which derives from the condensed memory of not only ourselves as individuals, but as evolutionary representatives of our species. So, we can say that the experience of "place" is an evolutionary echo which brings our genetic memory in resonance with a specific spatial situation. Thus, we can also say that place brings together memory and actuality, reality and imagination, past and present. Entering a powerful place evokes a recollection, a sense that I have already been there. Place can also be a social agreement, such as collective meeting places or memorial sites. But even in these cases, a deeper impact, the structure of the place, has to resonate with the inner qualities of placeness in our minds, as otherwise the place remains only a physical address.

We live in a world that we ourselves structure and subdivide into countless namable and memorizable places on the basis of special features of these settings. It is this process of

"placing" that gives us the experiential structure of the world, its perceptual and memorizable qualities. Oftentimes, returning from travels to different places in the world, I remember the visits and encounters of the past week because of the countless places that organize my otherwise unstructured and unarticulated continuum of memorized experiences. The memorizable places are embedded in a nameless and shapeless background fabric. The experiencing and memorizing of places is akin to the reading of foreground images against their unarticulated background.

I am suggesting here an architectural psychology and esthetics that is grounded in biological and evolutionary processes and adaptations. The neurobiologist Semir Zeki makes a pledge in his book on art and neurological understanding: "…to develop the outlines of a theory of aesthetics that is biologically based."[16] This was also Alvar Aalto's view, as he once wrote: "I would like to add as my personal, emotional view, that architecture and its details are in some way part of biology."[17] This is a view that can tie architecture back to our fundamental historicity. I believe that it is thoughtless to neglect or even try to work against the inherited nature in ourselves.

Endnotes

1. Robert Pogue Harrison, *Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p. 130.

2. John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Putnam, 1934), p. 263.

3. Aristotle as cited by Jeff Malpas in his lecture at the *Understanding and Designing Place Seminar on Architecture and Philosophy* at Tampere University of Technology, 3 April, 2017.

4. Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes the notion of the flesh in his essay "The Intertwining – The Chiasm," in Claude Lefort (ed.), *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1992). "My body is made of the same flesh as the world […] this flesh of my body is shared by the world […]" p. 248.

5. Richard Dawkins, *The Extended Phenotype* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

6. Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Attunement: Architectural Meaning after the Crises of Modern Science* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016).

7. Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion, 1986). "Existential outsideness involves a self-conscious and reflective uninvolvement, an alienation from people and places, a homelessness, a sense of the unreality of the world, and of not belonging." Op cit, p. 51.

8. Karsten Harries, "Building and the Terror of Time," *Perspecta 19: The Yale Architectural Journal* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982), pp. 59–69.

9. Merleau-Ponty, "The Intertwining – The Chiasm," ibid.

10. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 203.

11. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Film and the New Psychology," *Sense and Non-Sense* (Evanston, IL.: Southwestern University Press, 1964), p. 48.

12. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, op. cit., p. 225.

13. Gaston Bachelard, *Poetics of Space* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 6.

14. John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, op. cit., pp. 4, 231.

15. Gary Hildebrand, *The Wright Space: Pattern and Meaning in Frank Lloyd Wright's Houses* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1992).

16. Semir Zeki, *Inner Vision: An Exploration of Art and the Brain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 1.

17. Alvar Aalto, "The Trout and the Stream," in Göran Schildt (ed.), *Alvar Aalto in His Own Words* (Helsinki: Otava Publishing Company, 1997), p. 108.

TECHNOLOGY, FOCALITY AND PLACE: ON THE MEANS AND GOALS OF ARCHITECTURE

Pekka Passinmäki

Architecture is a complex discipline. It draws from many other disciplines, but it does not itself have the status of a science because it is basically a practical field. In this article, I discuss the means and goals of architecture. I examine how different fields of knowledge are combined in architecture and how the core task of architecture should be understood. I argue that architecture is above all a humanistic discipline because its goal is to situate our life in a particular place and thus to give us a home on earth.

According to architectural historian and theorist Dalibor Vesely, architecture is a humanistic discipline because of its unifying understanding, which does not mean only a bridging of the contributions of other disciplines but also an understanding of typical human situations, in which everyday life is realized. In the process of designing, architects have to grasp the space and place in its wholeness, in its full phenomenal presence. Today, a relationship between the human and the place is threatened by technology. The danger of modern technology does not lie in single devices but rather in the way, it makes everything – humans included – part of its own one-dimensional logic. Technology is universal in nature and therefore local and situational factors have remained in its shadow.

The present article focuses on the work of the American philosopher Albert Borgmann. He does not oppose modern technology as such, but instead argues that technology is reformable through focal things and practices. By engaging fo-

cal things and practices, people can re-centre their lives and provide themselves a sense of place and meaning. Focal events always need a social and physical context in order to flourish and this is precisely what brings Borgmann's philosophy so close to the practice of architecture. At the end of the article, I take a closer look at Swiss architect Peter Zumthor, whose design method and buildings, in my estimation, can be used as an example of focal things and practices in contemporary architecture.

Means, goals and place

A building is a physical structure, a fact that may lead one to think that architecture is primarily a technical discipline. Such a definition seems apt, especially nowadays, as buildings are becoming technically more and more complicated. On the other hand, architecture is also an art form. It has an aesthetic dimension, a feature that distinguishes it from pure engineering. Is architecture then an aesthetic discipline? Architecture clearly includes both technical and aesthetic dimensions, but what is the relationship between the two? Is one a means and the other an end? Is art the goal of architecture and technology the means to achieve it?

In modern thinking, our reality has been divided into two. In architecture, this subject-object division has entailed a split; e.g. between human and environment, theory and practice, and designing and building. Even, the work of architecture has been split in two: it has been understood, for instance, as a combination of building and decoration, of a technological structure and an aesthetic cladding. The idea of architecture as a technical or aesthetic discipline is a product of modern thinking, as well as the means-end schema that is being considered here. We face the modern world everywhere.

In modern architectural theory, the building is sometimes understood as a technological object (functionalism) and sometimes as an aesthetic object (postmodernism) but the relationship between the two has remained problematic. It is not the case that art – as an aesthetic object – is the goal of architecture, and technology a means to achieve it nor vice versa. Something more is needed. The ultimate task of architecture is to interpret a way of life during each historical period, and therefore architecture as pure engineering, an autonomous artwork or a combination of these two is insufficient. What, then, is the goal of architecture? What kind of discipline is it? Vesely describes the task of architecture as follows:

> [A]rchitecture is not in the first place a technical but a humanistic discipline. This must be clear to everyone who sees a distinction between means and goals, and agrees that the goal, the essence of architecture, its main purpose, is to situate our life in a particular place and create the right conditions for our existence and coexistence, not only with other people, but also with the given natural conditions and cultural circumstances. Skills, techniques and technologies are only means that can help us to fulfill this purpose and goal.[1]

In the quotation above regarding the essence of architecture, Vesely states that the goal of architecture is to situate our life in a particular place and thus to give us a home on earth. Technology is seen as a means to this goal but when looking at the matter more broadly, its role is actually a bit more complicated. On the one hand, technology helps us to construct better houses but, on the other hand, it often increases the human sense of homelessness. How then should we understand human homelessness and the role that technology plays in it?

Technology and the problem of homelessness

Homelessness in architecture can be defined in at least three different ways: I call them "housing shortage", "homelessness of human existence", and "homelessness of contemporary people". In everyday language, homelessness is generally understood as the housing shortage. The housing shortage is linked to a quantity of buildings and apartments. People need a physical shelter, a house or an apartment that affords a home. According to this definition, the goal of architecture is a functional construction and thus technology is, of course, a proper means to the desired end. Here the role of technology appears mostly in a positive way.

Homelessness can also be understood as a fundamental feature of human existence. We do not know the ultimate purpose of life and therefore human beings have always been searching for meaning, for the true home in the universe. Religion, philosophy, art, etc. are human responses to this kind of homelessness. People need a physical shelter but also a spiritual shelter. Greek temples and medieval cathedrals are examples of buildings that gave spiritual shelter to the people in their own time. This definition outlines the humanistic task of the architecture. It tells how the goal of architecture is to make our lives meaningful.

The term "homelessness of contemporary people" is adopted from Martin Heidegger, according to whom, this kind of homelessness is a symptom of the oblivion of Being that is the ultimate ground of our existence.[2] I use the term to describe the third kind of homelessness, which is related not to the quantity but rather to the quality of buildings. Contemporary technology enables the production of imposing constructions, but the problem is a lack of meaning. Airports, highways, housing areas, and glass skyscrapers are similar the world over. Placelessness is a typical feature of contemporary architecture.

Fundamentally, construction technology and architecture are not reasons for the homelessness of contemporary people. They are just symptoms. The current architectural problems are part of a more extensive and more profound crisis of western people, as Alberto Pérez-Gómez has described in his eminent book *Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science* (1983). The impact of the crisis pervades all areas of life: science, art, and everyday life. The crisis began at the beginning of the seventeenth century, when modern thinking was born.

One central reason for the current crisis is a lack of meaningful goals. Friedrich Nietzsche declared the death of God and, accordingly, all ideals and values, which resulted to radical relativism and nihilism. It seems that nothing is sacred any more. In the absence of commonly shared values, aesthetic spectacles ("wow-factor architecture") and all kinds of technical efficiency (e.g. a zero-energy building) have replaced the deeper goals. In order to provide spiritual shelter, architecture should situate our life in a particular place in a meaningful way. A Cartesian subject-object division means, however, a split between a human and the environment and therefore aesthetic and technological approaches – that are based on this division – are unable to bind human beings to the place.

Today, we live in a technological world, and technology shapes our relationship with the place. Technology is not, however, only a means or tools, machines, and structures but rather it determines our whole existence in a very fundamental way.

Technology as a means and as an enframing

We normally understand technology as a means to an end or as a human activity. These two definitions of technology belong together. Human activity sets an end and then selects the means to achieve it. Heidegger calls this conception of

technology the *instrumental* and *anthropological* definition of technology. According to this definition, technology is something neutral and innocent – a mere means.[3] The conventional approach sees technology as a value-neutral means, whereas an end is interwoven into a context and values. The determination of ends and values is seen to be a matter of rational thinking.

Technology has not always been a means. The word "technology" is derived from an ancient Greek term *techne*, which meant a radically different way of producing things than technological manipulation. *Techne* meant both "craft" and "art" and actually, it was the name of all human making. But what is most important, it was not a means at all. Heidegger writes that "[…] what is decisive in techne does not lie at all in making and manipulating nor in the using of means, but rather in […] revealing."[4] Revealing (*aletheia*) meant that something that does not yet exist comes into being. Greeks called this kind of occasioning *poiesis*, bringing-forth. According to Heidegger, *poiesis* can happen in two ways: in nature (*physis*) or through human making (*techne*). In nature, something arises from out of itself, e.g. a plant blooms into a flower. In addition to this, human beings can bring-forth things that nature itself cannot reveal.[5] *Techne* was not acting and manipulating but receiving and responding. It was a kind of "freeing", or producing, in which a human being as a kind of catalyst brought-forth things in an analogous way to nature. In ancient times and in the Middle Ages the human and the world were one.

The way artefacts were produced changed radically in the transition from a pretechnological era to an era of modern technology. Modern technology differed from earlier ones because it was based on modern physics and exact sciences. Heidegger states, however, that this feature is not enough to define the essence of modern technology, nor is the instrumental and anthropological understanding of technology.[6] For

Heidegger, modern technology is no mere means, it is a way of revealing.[7] He calls the essence of modern technology "enframing" (*Gestell*) and describes it as follows: "It [enframing] is nothing technological, nothing on the order of machine. It is the way in which the real reveals itself as a standing-reserve (*Bestand*)."[8]

The revealing that occurs through modern technology is totally different from that, which took place in *techne*. In the technological epoch, Being is revealed as a resource (*Bestand*) that can be used. The emergence of modern technology meant not only that simple tools became complicated machines but also a machine's relation to other machines changed. Machines were no longer autonomous but were formed into networks. Single machines completely lost their autonomies because they became only parts of some bigger system. Modern technologies have taken larger and larger territories of human praxis and as a result of this everything – humans included – has become only resources of the technologies. Enframing means that everything is ordered to stand by as material for later use.[9] In this framework, means are more important than goals. What is important to technology as a means is that it works and is efficient: "the maximum yield at the minimum expense."[10] Deeper goals of human life are missing. It is just this one-dimensionality – when everything is mere human construction – which gives rise to the homelessness of contemporary people. An oblivion of Being occurred when the standing-reserve replaced a more original revealing.

In the end of his analysis of modern technology, Heidegger states that "here and now and in little things" we can try to overcome enframing and the danger it entails.[11] In his late essay *Building Dwelling Thinking*, he gives an example of how some everyday things, for instance a bridge, can open a world for local people in a meaningful way.[12] Here, however, I will not go deeper into Heidegger's examples but turn instead to

Borgmann's thinking on the philosophy of technology. His analysis of technology is based on the notion of the "device paradigm" that owes much to Heidegger's thinking on enframing. Borgmann states: "Technology becomes most concrete and evident in (technological) devices, in objects such as television sets, central heating plants, automobiles, and the like. Devices therefore represent clear and accessible cases of the pattern or paradigm of modern technology."[13] We live our everyday lives in the midst of the technological devices and structures but every now and then there are moments when the holding sway of technology breaks down and we feel our lives to be full of meaning. Borgmann calls these moments "focal events". Focal events are based on focal things and practices.

Focality and the unity of means and ends

Technological devices have brought many improvements to human dwelling conditions but what they cannot do, however, is provide us with a sense of place or meaning. That is the problem. The problem is recognized but what is more difficult is to conceive what humans – and especially we architects – can do in this situation. Borgmann does not oppose technology but instead argues that technology is reformable through focal things and practices. His most well-known example deals with the differences between a pretechnological wood-heating and modern central heating. I think it is worth running through the example here in its entirety.

Focal things and focal practices belong together, which means that focal things are possible only through the related practice. Borgmann illustrates his understanding of focality through a Latin word *focus*, which means a hearth or fireplace. In old cultures, the warmth of the building could not be taken for granted. Warming up the hearth or another fireplace required a lot of work. In the pretechnological era, the hearth was a centre of the house, a focal object that gathered together the family for daily practices. These focal practices of warming engaged family members bodily and socially to the world of the fireplace.[14] Borgmann describes the world of the fireplace as follows:

> Thus a stove used to furnish more than mere warmth. It was a focus, a hearth, a place that gathered the work and leisure of a family and gave the house a center. Its coldness marked the morning, and the spreading of its warmth the beginning of the day. It assigned to the different family members tasks that defined their place in the household. The mother built the fire, the children kept the firebox filled, and the father cut the firewood. It provides for the entire family a regular and bodily engagement with the rhythm of the seasons that was woven together of the threat of cold and the solace of warmth.[15]

While writing the text above, Borgmann states that he had an old Montana lifestyle in mind, but he also refers to older cultures, where the hearth had even still greater significance in people's lives. For example, for the Romans the *focus* was a holy place where the housegods resided. The hearth was a place where a marriage was sanctified, the dead were buried, and where sacrifices to the housegods were made before and after meals. Our own present-day houses no longer have such a focus in the ancient sense but, as Borgmann states, the hearth's significance can still be seen in the fireplace of many modern homes. The fire is, however, mostly symbolic nowadays because it rarely gives sufficient warmth. Heating is automatized and therefore the fireplace and the activities intertwined with it no longer play a central role in the family members' daily lives.[16] Borgmann's fireplace example is a background against which he outlines the specific character-

istics of the device. The world of the central heating plant is completely different from that of the fireplace:

> A device such as a central heating plant procures mere warmth and disburdens us of all other elements. These are taken over by the machinery of the device. The machinery makes no demands on our skill, strength, or attention, and it is less demanding the less it makes its presence felt. In the progress of technology, the machinery of a device has therefore a tendency to become concealed or to shrink. Of all the physical properties of a device, those alone are crucial and prominent which constitute the commodity that the device procures. Informally speaking, the commodity of a device is "what a device is there for." In the case of central heating plant it is warmth, with a telephone it is communication, a car provides transportation, frozen food makes up a meal, a stereo set furnishes music.[17]

Devices produce commodities and disburden people by releasing them from various requirements concerning skills, activities, and attention. They furnish dwellers with conveniences but at the same time leave them as outsiders. They make available goods and services but they do not reveal a place and its particular orientation towards nature and culture. Devices are for commodities; in other words, devices are means and commodities are ends. In the device paradigm, means must be efficient but also as inconspicuous as possible because devices should constitute a neutral and homogenous background for everyday life.[18] Nowadays, we find the ideas of availability, inconspicuousness, and spatial indifference in smart-house and smart-city ideologies but they were strongly present already in the machine metaphors of modern architecture. Robert Socolow's description of a 1960s office building is an excellent summary of the device paradigm in architecture:

> The downtown office building of the 1960s already stands as a metaphor for the whole society's desire for independence from the natural setting: temperature, humidity, air exchange, and lightning are all controlled mechanically, independent of season, wind speed, or whether one is on the north or south side of the building. Neither materials nor design change as the location is moved in latitude by thousands of miles.[19]

When the two above described lifestyles are placed side by side, the old Montana lifestyle appears nostalgic and even obsolete. That is not, however, the point. Borgmann argues that technological devices have disburdened our lives, but they have not guaranteed a deeper and more meaningful life. Instead, technologization has led to ever-increasing consumption and entertainment and to the boredom that often follows.[20] He states that the danger of technology does not lie in single devices but in the pervasiveness and consistency of the system and that, the rule of technology can be challenged only through the practice of engagement.[21] That is the point. It is not about nostalgia but about today's solutions. Focal practices should re-centre human lives; that is, make them meaningful in the midst of the technological everyday life, and therefore a rejection of the contemporary technological world is not an option. Borgmann emphasizes that the turn to focal things and practices cannot be based on a setting aside or escape from technology but a kind of affirmation of it. He sees that traditional things and practices can have a new splendour within contemporary technological context.[22]

Technological production is based on means-ends division, whereas in focal practices means and ends are one and the same. Actually, focal practices mean the overcoming of subject-object dualism as a whole, which can be seen, for example, in the unity of means and ends, body and world,

and individual and community in the fireplace example. Borgmann states that focal things can prosper only through the related practice and therefore one thing is to find proper traditional practices from today's everyday life. A festive meal is one such practice. Eating in a focal setting differs sharply from the anonymous fast-food meal. We can satisfy human needs by making a quick visit to McDonald's, consuming a Big Mac and a Coke without concentrating on the event at all. Borgmann calls this "technological eating". Contrary to the fast-food meal, the festive meal has a structure enacted by the discipline of table manners. As a focal event, the dinner gathers a family and friends around the table and its offerings. The grand meal is a social event that unites present and tradition, culture and gifts of nature. A runner and the running route is another typical focal setting today. In long-distance running, effort and joy, means and ends, mind and body, and body and world are one. Borgmann's other examples are fly-fishing, music, gardening, hiking in the wilderness, and the arts and crafts.[23]

Focal things and practices aim at overcoming the one-dimensional technological world and, at the same time, they can be seen as a contemporary response to the homelessness of human existence. They give spiritual shelter by providing us with a sense of place and meaning. This spiritual shelter is not, however, public but limited to certain private or local situations. Borgmann emphasizes that today's focal practices differ considerably from their eminent pretechnological predecessors. The latter ones, such as Greek temples and medieval cathedrals, were public and prominent social and physical settings, whereas our focal practices are humble and scattered. Sometimes they are so private and limited that they can hardly be called practices at all. For the present, focal activities flourish at the margins of public attention but nevertheless Borgmann sees them as a foundation for the reform of technology.[24]

Architecture, focality, and place

According to Borgmann, the physical environment is the ultimate ground of human existence. It is given to us through the being of things. Both Heidegger and Borgmann state that a deep and meaningful life in the midst of a technological world can only be attained if we find a proper relation to the reality of things. There is nevertheless a certain difference between Heidegger's and Borgmann's thinking on things. In their essay on Borgmann's philosophy of technology, David Strong and Eric Higgs clarify that Borgmann has highlighted and developed an under articulated side of Heidegger's late thinking on things, on the basis of which almost any material object can be interpreted as a thing. Borgmann has moved the locus of Heidegger's thinking more towards those special things of our lives that are relevant to our well-being.[25]

According to Heidegger, the origin of meaning lies in our engagement with the world of things that stand out in their own right and speak to us in their own voice. Also, Borgmann's understanding of significance has its roots in this conception but, according to him, meanings emerge first and foremost through focal things and practices:

> This is a very general answer, given that "significance" is nothing but the highest generic term for things and practices that stand out in their own right. What specifically are those things and practices? A less general answer was given when it was said that the present critique of technology is moved by a concern for those things and practices that used to and still can engage and grace us in their own right and which are now threatened by technology.[26]

In the past, temples and cathedrals gathered entire cultures together but nowadays, focal things can centre only individuals, families, and local communities. Thus, what we architects can do in this situation, according to Borgmann, is "to reshape our cities so that they provide prominent and thoughtfully designed places for the exercise of the various focal practices that have engaged us, for sports, music, the arts, worship, and engaging work."[27] In other words, architects can promote the reform of technology by applying Borgmann's ideas to public things and communal practices.

Focal events always need a social and physical context in order to flourish and just here a central role for architecture in the reform of technology stands out. Focal things and practices can interweave in many different ways and in many different scales but always they take place in some natural or built setting. Strong considers that "Borgmann's most important philosophical achievement beyond and departure from Heidegger, for whom the essence of technology is nothing *technological*, is his physicalism: getting us to attend to the significance of our physical world and tangible things."[28] Matter matters because all our everyday activities and events are directly tied to material settings and physical things. Strong characterizes Borgmann's philosophy as a "philosophy in the service of things",[29] which means that this philosophy comes close to the practice of architecture.

Focal thing or "focal reality" – a term that Borgmann also sometimes uses – engages human beings within a place. He writes that focal reality "is simply a placeholder for the encounters each of us has with things that of themselves have engaged mind and body and centered our lives."[30] Focal practices always involve the habitation of places, but as Paul B. Thompson argues, Borgmann's philosophy does not give a clear answer to the question of how a focal thing and place are conceptually related. Thompson considers place to be a more

fundamental entity than thing and, according to him, this holds true also with regards to Borgmann's philosophy, even though his writings allow different interpretations as well.[31]

How then can architects promote focal events in practice? How should design work be done? What features should a finished building have? How does one get people to commit to focal activities? Before answering these questions, some preliminary remarks are necessary. First, focal events – whether designing or experiencing a building – can only come about through reciprocal action between humans and things. Second, focal activities require people to have a receptive attitude towards things. And third, focal events mean that both humans and things are realized in a new and eloquent way. Strong sums up this reciprocal relationship as follows:

> Once we have limited philosophy to being in the service of things – tethered to things, working in tandem with art, and carrying out evaluations in the light of things – is there room in any guiding ideas in the philosophy? […] On my reading, at least, I find that there exists such an idea in Borgmann's philosophy in the service of things. Pivotal for him is the idea that there exists "a symmetry between human life and its setting" […] Our very being is tied to things in this philosophy in the service of things. Things and ourselves are codisclosed in this relationship. […] As people act and develop in relation to things, the things themselves are also disclosed in their manifold depth. So the potential both of what people are capable and what things are capable of are simultaneously realized in this relation. […] By responding to things in their full dimensions, I too emerge in the fullness of my dimensions.[32]

A focal event can occur either explicitly or implicitly. It can happen when one decides to commit to a focal activity or when a focal thing in favourable circumstances makes a

focal event happen.[33] Architecture can support both of these possibilities. Building can provide suitable conditions for a focal activity or, as a built thing, it can open a focal reality in a more general level. Yet ultimately, architects can only create environments that enable and encourage focal events to happen, but they have no power to force people to experience the environment in a certain way.

Although, architecture may not be able to create focal experiences in a strong sense, it still has an important role to play as a ubiquitous context of human activities. A building – or a city – can be seen as a focal thing from both functional and aesthetic viewpoints. A functional viewpoint is self-evident: architecture provides designed places for various focal practices. Architecture as a work of art that more implicitly affects the disclosure of focal reality is, however, a more complex issue to deal with. Borgmann has not written much about a work of art as a focal thing. He has mentioned that Greek temples and medieval cathedrals were focal things that opened up reality to the people in their own time, but he has not written about the meaning of modern artworks. However, he has discussed the central importance of buildings and cities from a slightly different perspective, that is, from the perspective of place and space.

Borgmann has been concerned about the fate of contemporary cities. Big cities, along with their high-rise offices, hotels and apartment buildings, constitute technological spaces – realizations of Cartesian three-dimensional coordinate systems – which, he argues, do not have a proper relation to a particular nature or culture, in the sense that for example a Greek temple, medieval castle or a baroque orchestral suite had. In those abstract environments, people lack a sense of position or location; they are not oriented as they were in more traditional towns. Old towns and city districts are places where orientation is easier and more natural, but today's urban city culture cannot be based solely on an admiration for old urban environments.[34]

Technological devices and buildings constitute a neutral and homogenous space, whereas focal things disclose a place and reveal a particular orientation with nature and culture. According to Borgmann, as a "memorable place" a city or a building has the status of focal thing. He writes: "As Kent C. Bloomer and Charles W. Moore point out, a city is a memorable place if it is oriented by nature, history, divinity, or a great and common task. A memorable city is a focal thing writ large. It gathers and focuses the crucial dimensions of the world.", and he adds: "These memorable places include buildings as well as towns or cities."[35] The quotes show that Borgmann treats major buildings and cities as places, not as works of art but, in any case, it seems that buildings can act as a focal thing and centre for local communities also on the basis of their non-functional characteristics. In my interpretation, on this point Borgmann comes quite close to Heidegger's thinking on buildings as things.

Even though Borgmann has not discussed the meaning of work of art, he has raised arts and crafts as an example of a focal activity. Building design can be seen as a similar activity. As a focal activity, artistic handwork and building design should be seen as receiving and responding, a revealing that resembles ancient Greek *techne.* Focal making goes beyond the means-ends division and brings forth things without reducing them to objects or devices.

After these quite general remarks on architecture and focality, I will next take a closer look at an architect whose design method and buildings, in my own estimation, can be used as an example of focal things and practices in contemporary architecture. The architect in question is Peter Zumthor. He is not a theoretician, but his work is nevertheless based on certain philosophical ideas that bring him quite close to Borgmann's thinking.

Focality in Peter Zumthor's practice

Especially at the time of his international breakthrough in the 1990s, Zumthor was very inspired by Heidegger's philosophy. I do not know whether he has ever read any of Borgmann's books, but what is interesting is that, just like Borgmann, he has moved from Heidegger's philosophy on things towards its concrete implementation. Without linking him too strongly to any other thinker – which might lead to a misunderstanding of his own design philosophy – one thing is clear: Zumthor is a practitioner, who is interested in dwelling, things and places in the manner that is familiar to us from phenomenological discourse. In his lecture *The Hard Core of Beauty* held in 1991, he describes the roots of his thinking as follows:

> The concept of dwelling, understood in Heidegger's wide sense of living and thinking in places and spaces, contains an exact reference to what reality means to me as an architect. It is not the reality of theories detached from things, it is the reality of the concrete building assignment relating to the act or state of dwelling that interests me and upon which I wish to concentrate my imaginative faculties. It is the reality of building materials, stone, cloth, steel, leather …, and the reality of the structures I use to construct the building whose properties I wish to penetrate with my imagination, bringing meaning and sensuousness to bear so that the spark of the successful building may be kindled, a building that can serve as a home for man.[36]

Zumthor started out as a cabinetmaker and only later moved into architecture. Actually, he still sees himself as a craftsman, one who makes buildings. He avoids theoretical speculation and conceptualization and rather relies more on experiences, memories, and the imagination, on his own inner and outer images, which he then turns into concrete bodies and forms. His physicalism is even more radical than that of Borgmann. Zumthor has explained that if there is an abstract concept he immediately tries to translate it in his mind into a physical form, so that he can somehow feel it with his body, soul, and emotions. He does not make design decisions through abstract concepts but always imagines his projects as being part of the physical world.[37] Because of this, Zumthor's office is full of scale models and installations made from real building materials such as wood, concrete and metal.

Zumthor's design method differs from conventional ones. He does not start from aesthetic or functional issues but from the physical reality of things: "[…] let things take effect. That is exactly how I want to proceed; I want to start by taking a look at what I experience and feel."[38] After these first impressions of a site, he continues by imagining everything that needs to be considered in relation to the object he envisions: place, use, and the people who will live there. All these present inner images are then mixed with older ones, i.e. with Zumthor's own memories, and little by little the first images of the new building emerge. At the end of the process, Zumthor and his staff transform the images of the building into concrete building forms.[39]

The concrete design work is always done with real materials and sometimes even in real size. Zumthor does not see materials as "mute" matter intended for aesthetic or technological use but rather tries "to expose the very essence of materials, which is beyond all culturally conveyed meaning." He considers carefully which material or materials – he often limits the selection to just three – are appropriate to the work at hand, and he then tries to bring forth those materials in their own being in such a way that mutual tensions between the materials and structures create the desired atmospheric quality.[40] He believes in the inherent power of material things: "Material is stronger than an idea, it's stronger than an image because it's

really there, and it's there in its own right."[41]

Zumthor considers himself a craftsman who solves practical design problems. He is not a theoretician who solves the conceptual problems of architectural theory. In academic circles, this often leads to confusing situations because people approach him as an intellectual, one who can give answers to the most varied theoretical questions of architecture. The confusion shows how difficult the idea of "letting things be" still is to understand, even though Heidegger's phenomenology has been much discussed in architecture for already a relatively long time.

The Thermal Baths in Vals (Graubünden, Switzerland, 1996) is probably Zumthor's most celebrated building. It is also the building whose design process he has most extensively described in his writings. The building appears paradigmatic in terms of both its design and implementation; a unique and highly personal design approach has produced a unique building. The thermal baths are situated in the small mountain village of Vals and, according to Zumthor, the planning process was a joint effort of the whole village. The village was the client: different phases and stages of the project were discussed and approved in communal meetings and when completed the villagers could use the baths at a reduced price.[42] The baths gather the local community but it also has international significance. When the building is examined on the basis of Borgmann's philosophy, it is easy to see it, on the one hand, as a memorable place and, on the other hand, as a building that provides suitable conditions for a focal activity.

Zumthor has said that the two most important things concerning the baths were that it belongs to the village and that it looks like it has always been there.[43] He wanted to create a building that in a natural and archaic manner would be part of the environment and the everyday life of the villagers. Zumthor's studio started the project by trying to find answers

Fig 1. Peter Zumthor, Therman Baths, Vals, 1996: outdoor pool.

Fig 2. The archaic-looking spa located among older hotel buildings.

to questions posed by the site, purpose and materials: mountain rock and water. Working with the inherent laws of the materials in connection with a building assignment, they then produced structures and spaces that, according to Zumthor, possessed a primordial force and were "culturally innocent".[44] The final outcome was a building that looks like a huge artificial stone block with a cavernous space carved into it and with grass growing on the top (Figs. 1-2). In the baths, nature is revealed to the local inhabitants in new forms, and thus the building embodies both ancient and current experiences of the place. As a modern piece of architecture that bespeaks its natural origin, the building creates a memorable place that enables focal events.

Discussing the Vals baths from the point of view of focal things and practices is most rewarding when focusing on the baths' interior spaces and functions (Fig. 3). Zumthor's example shows the great possibilities architectural design – when done well – can provide in improving people's well-being. The project consisted of a preliminary programme, within which Zumthor, however, was able to implement his own visions in very broad way. As always with his work, he started from scratch by pondering what the baths and the bathing itself could be. The act of bathing was actually at the very core of the whole design process; according to Zumthor, the building was designed from the inside out.[45] A standard hotel swimming pool was something he wanted to avoid; he did not want to make a place for entertaining and consumption, but instead sought a deeper bathing experience. Certain design solutions show that a busy consumer society has consciously been left outside the baths: for instance, there is no café connected to the indoor or outdoor pool, and the only clock in the pool spaces is hidden at the top of a low post, where it can be found initially only by chance, though having discovered it thereafter the bathers know where to look for it. All kinds of typical lap

Fig 3. Peter Zumthor, Thermal Baths, Vals, 1996. The main indoor pool is to the right. An image like this can give some indication of the atmosphere of the bathing-spaces, but the actual bathing experience cannot be conveyed through images. In addition, photography is not allowed inside the spa facilities, and therefore the building contains a number of spaces with no published photos.

pools, slides and gadgets are missing as well. In order to deepen the bathing experience, Zumthor focused on a ritualistic side of the bathing. The building is located at the heart of the hot spring (the only one in Switzerland), which brings its own mystical nuance to the ritual. In fact, the intertwining of all things happened just at the level of the mystical images, on which Zumthor has commented:

> Consequently, the design process was a playful but patient process of exploration independent from rigid formal models. Right from the start, there was a feeling for the mystical nature of a world of stone inside the mountain, for darkness and light, for a reflection of light upon water, for the diffusion of light through steam-filled air, for the different sounds that water makes in stone surroundings, for warm stone and naked skin, for the ritual of bathing. From the start, there was a pleasure of working with these things of consciously bringing them into play. Only much later, when the design was almost complete, did I visit the old baths in Budapest, Istanbul and Bursa, and understand more fully not only the sources of these seemingly universal images, but their truly archaic nature.[46]

Zumthor explains that the ritual of bathing in the baths entails the silent experiences of bathing and cleansing, the body's contact with water at different temperatures and in different kinds of spaces, relaxing in the water, and touching the stone.[47] Architecture supports and enables this ritual, on the one hand, with very strong and almost theatrical solutions, like the long entrance corridor, the "sexy" red-lighted changing rooms and a mystical drinking fountain, and, on the other hand, with an open and continuous internal space at the level of the baths, where people can freely stroll and find their own paths. All spaces have been designed to serve a pleasant atmosphere for the body, not only as experienced by oneself but also as seen by others.[48] Zumthor states that "The basic thing is that I have tried to make spaces that people look really beautiful in, and people who are pale faced and wrinkled look nice there too. It's easy to make a pool in which only, what's her name, Claudia Schiffer, looks good. There was an old woman there who told me, I know exactly why you are doing what you do here; so that people look nice."[49] When I myself personally visited the baths, I realized that even though it is a public building, the bathing experience itself is very private and intimate. The silent and pleasant atmosphere makes one turn inwards and experience one's being in a very intense manner. It is easy to call that experience afterwards a focal event.[50]

Zumthor trusts in the power of architecture. He believes that even in our secular age architecture can provide a home for people. It all depends on the quality of architecture and, particularly, on how the goal of architecture is set. In his book, *A Feeling of History* (2018), Zumthor explains how his buildings, while being all different, still share one common feature concerning the way they are connected to the ground, to a particular place. His goal is to give people a place on earth where they feel at home.

> My buildings are grounded in ways that are not formal. I believe it has to do with something more basic and more essential. Mircea Eliade talks about certain personal and sacred places that give us a place on earth, that ground us. I like to think that my buildings are grounded in a similar way, to become a *place*, either sacred or profane, so that they can become a part of a *home* – for me, for a few, for many.[51]

Architecture as a humanistic discipline

As stated earlier, Vesely regards architecture as a humanistic discipline. According to him, the main purpose of architecture

"is to situate our life in a particular place and create the right conditions for our existence and coexistence, not only with other people, but also with the given natural conditions and cultural circumstances." In Vesely's understanding of architecture as a humanistic discipline, humanism does not refer to the influence of the humanities on architecture or to a separate role of the humanities in design but rather he thinks that architecture itself is a humanistic discipline. Such a viewpoint is motivated by a unifying understanding of architecture; unlike individual techniques and specialized sciences and humanities, architecture faces reality in its entirety. While designing, architects have to grasp the space and place in its wholeness, in its full phenomenal presence. Therefore, the humanistic approach in architecture is not based only on the unifying of knowledge, i.e. the bridging of the contributions of individual disciplines, but also on an understanding of the typical human situations.[52]

Our everyday life is full of recurring situations in which a certain experience or praxis is intertwined with a particular place or space. Vesely calls them "typical (paradigmatic) situations". Those situations are typical because they are closely related to habits, traditions and customs, and in the deeper level to institutions and archetypes, and furthermore they are paradigmatic because they have the power to gather and maintain an immense richness of human experience. Situations represent the most holistic way of understanding our experience of the surrounding world. Everyday routines, such as eating, working and learning, are simple examples of typical situations that need typical places but also more complex institutional settings can be viewed in the same way. A French café, for example, is a typical paradigmatic situation based on invisible and visible aspects of French culture. As Vesely states, an essential nature of French café is only partially revealed by its visible appearance and hence a proper understanding of the

identity and meaning of the institution requires a deep commitment to French life. Typical (paradigmatic) situations can be fully understood only by experiencing and living them.[53]

Vesely sees the humanities – as they are generally practiced today – as being incapable of understanding the lived world in its wholeness. The wholeness can be better understood by more poetic approaches, such as painting, sculpture, literature, and theatre, or by phenomenological and hermeneutical analyses.[54] Also Heidegger had discussed the problem of modern humanism. According to him, the world "humanism" has lost its meaning because its essence has become metaphysical. Modern humanism is based on a subject-object division and it thus persists in the oblivion of Being. In order to restore its meaning, Heidegger returns to the older meaning of the word *humanitas* and redefines the concept in more primordial way. The redefinition requires a new understanding of the human being, according to which the essence of human being lies in *ek-sistence*.[55] That means that, as Heidegger sees it, "the way that man in his proper essence becomes present to Being is ecstatic inherence in the truth of Being"[56] Based on this, "humanism" now means, respectively, that "the essence of man is essential for the truth of Being."[57] Humanism has its roots in *ek-sistence*, in humans' being-in-the-world, and so have building and dwelling as well. In Heidegger's fundamental ontology, "being-in-the-world" and "(poetic) dwelling" mean the same: it is the manner in which humans exist on the earth. From the point of view of Heidegger's philosophy, a humanistic approach in architecture can be seen to mean above all that people should seek for a new relation to the world. His often-quoted phrase "only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build"[58] refers just to a need for that change. The thinking that merely represents should be replaced by the thinking that responds and recalls. Only then do things appear as things again.[59]

In this article, I have discussed in particular the humanistic goals and their implementation in the field of architecture. Borgmann's contribution to the topic has been at the heart of this study. Like Heidegger, Borgmann strives to find a solution to the problem of modern technology. In this project, they both share certain premises but later go in different directions. Heidegger insists on the shift in thinking, a new approach that is also called "letting things be". In letting-be one seeks for a free relation to technology, which means saying "yes" and "no" to technological devices.[60] Technology itself is not changed. Borgmann's reform of technology is based on focal things and practices. In his approach, technological devices and their modifications are also discussed.

The main purpose of the present article has been to highlight Borgmann's thinking and its connections to architecture. Building, however, let alone a city, is a very complicated thing in terms of both technology and use, and therefore my analysis remains very preliminary. Borgmann makes a sharp division between a device and a focal thing, and he seems to be very selective in discussing which focal things and practices are appropriate for promoting human well-being. But as Strong and Higgs note, basically, "Borgmann thinks of things and devices as being on a continuum: between the clear examples of things and devices are many degrees of variation."[61] Such comments can be found here and there in his writings. It would be well worth furthering that discussion because, especially in architecture, the boundary between device-like (technological) and thing-like qualities is shifting. Another interesting view opens up from the fact that the range of potential focal practices associated with buildings and cities is almost unlimited. Engaging with those issues would deepen the idea of how Borgmann's "philosophy in the service of things" should be understood and implemented in architecture.

Endnotes

1. Dalibor Vesely, "Architecture as a Humanistic Discipline", in Soumyen Bandyopadhyay, Jane Lomholt, Nicholas Temple and Renée Tobe (eds.), *The Humanities in Architectural Design. A Contemporary and Historical Perspective* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), p.197.

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34. Ibid, p.67, 79, 242-244, and Borgmann 1993, pp.58-59. Here, Borgmann distinguishes between culture as scenery and culture as enactment. Modern city cultures are cultures as scenery, which means that they are taken in by looking or listening, whereas a Greek temple, medieval castle, or baroque orchestral suite were created and taken in in different ways; they were enacted as culture. See Borgmann 1987, p.244.

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PASSING THE THRESHOLD OF TIME: JUXTAPOSING LITERARY AND ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSES OF AMURI, TAMPERE

Klaske Havik[1]

Passing over the threshold of the Amuri building in Tampere is like passing a threshold of time, with the smells of wheat, cinnamon and the start of autumn. The wooden floor creaks beneath our feet as we enter and walk toward the café counter laden with freshly baked buns neatly displayed in baskets, and a can of plain black coffee. The double wood-framed windows, constructed to withstand the cold winters, look out to a peaceful courtyard. In a sequence of low-ceilinged square rooms, small groups of people sit silently at tables with pastel-coloured tablecloths, drinking their morning coffee. It is as if the factory workers of a century ago are still here every day.

The Amurin Helmi café is located in one of the few surviving wooden residential blocks of the 19th century workers' housing area of Amuri in Tampere, Finland. The study on which the present article is based focused on these old workers' houses. How can we learn about the life in the industrial city of Tampere at a time around the beginning of the 20th century, and can such knowledge inform our scenarios for possible new interventions?

In autumn 2017, the Architectural Design Advanced Course in Tampere[2] investigated the area around the Pyynikki Square in central Tampere through the thematic lens of "Memory of Place". The present article discusses some of the

Fig 1. The wooden residential blocks of Amuri, Tampere, currently in use as the Amuri Workers' Museum and the Amuri Helmi café.

work conducted in the studio and aims to confront today's "reading" of the place with literary accounts of the same place by Finnish writers during the 20th century. First, the case of the Pyynikki / Amuri neighbourhood will be situated within the larger context of medium-sized, former industrial cities in Europe. Next, the text will discuss how the changing identity of such cities calls for new approaches to urban development, consequently proposing that in order to develop responsible and sustainable urban projects there is a necessity to understand the specific local atmosphere of urban places. The article will show how literary narratives offer ways to trace such knowledge. Combining architectural, perceptual and social analyses of the site with literary accounts of the wooden residential area at different moments in its history (1940s, 1990s), an attempt is made to identify the site-specific qualities of the area so as to be able to build upon the traces of this valuable

literary and built heritage. Finally, by writing about these findings from the perspective of the Amuri building block as a character in itself, the present contribution hopes to provide a basis for architectural proposals that would do justice to the site's urban identity.

Tampere: A medium-sized industrial city

The Finnish city of Tampere became an industrial centre in the late 19th century due to its favourable location, with natural rapids between two lakes providing the necessary energy source. The neighbourhood under discussion here, Pyynikki / Amuri, was established during the early years of urban growth, with the foundation of the nearby factories, such as the match factory, brewery and textile factories. While the Pyynikki Square and the wooden villas between the square and Pyynikki Park belonged to the factory owners and the city's upper middle-class inhabitants, the wooden residential area of Amuri accommodated the workers. Tampere is an example of the typical European urban condition of medium-sized cities. While in the urban debate a lot of attention has been paid to the condition of the metropolis, one could argue that Europe is characterized by a relatively even spread of medium-sized cities.[3] These cities together epitomize a rich variety of distinct urban cultures, which are in turn embedded in urban narratives: stories containing multiple cultural layers, which are rich in information regarding citizens' socio-spatial practices, perceptions and expectations.

Many such medium-sized cities in Europe are today facing profound challenges and are attempting to redefine their identity amidst the shifting economic and demographic forces. In former industrial towns such as Tampere, the factories that once defined much of the life in the city up until the first half of the twentieth century are now closed, thus radically chang-

ing the urban identity of the city. Factories are demolished, left empty while awaiting later developments or re-used for new purposes, while the residential areas that used to accommodate factory workers are changing profoundly, most notably through demolition or gentrification. The double challenge of demographic changes and the departure of industry from the city centre causes a shift in urban identities, and in the way people perceive, remember and imagine their city. Conventional master-planning methods for urban development fail to respond to these shifting urban identities.

The current challenges require a different role from spatial professionals such as urban planners, architects and policymakers. As conventional planning codes and models of spatial development become unstable following economic uncertainty, alternative approaches to the urban question become more plausible. Policymakers and project developers in medium-sized European cities, such as Barreiro, Irún, Montreuil, Charleroi, Ingolstadt, Nacka, and Espoo (among the medium-size cities that participated in the Europan 13 design competition for architects and urban planners in 2015) have come to realize that univocal diagnoses and rigid planning methods based on precise cost-benefit calculations are no longer reliable – much less feasible. Instead, alternative methodologies that are able to foster interdisciplinary co-operation, while acknowledging distinct socio-spatial practices and experiences, are becoming vital. In this context, such initiatives as "Urban Innovation", "Temporary Use", "Incubator Policy", "Performativity", and "Creative City" have become prevalent in the field of urban regeneration.[4]

All of these initiatives coincide with questioning the value of traditional master planning and aim for a more experiential understanding of urban situations, in which the "lived" understanding of places plays a central role. "Soft" factors, such as the perception of urban atmospheres, become increasingly

important in providing *attuned*[5] environments for different urban populations. In seeking to preserve the inclusive, democratic nature of the contemporary European city, it is vital to aim for a fuller and better understanding of the underlying personal and collective stories that provide valuable information about the site-specific qualities of the urban context. In contemporary urban practice, site-specificity comes to the fore as a crucial criterion for the success of new developments. The focus of attention in planning has shifted from mere pragmatic location – the availability of materials, labour and infrastructure – to the very experience of place.[6]

The increasing mobility of people and the flexibility of labour conditions allow those people with economic security to choose their place of residence on the basis of personal preference rather than on the immediate proximity of work. Therefore, more subjective qualities, such as the social environment and the atmosphere of places, become more important factors for residents as well as companies. Indeed, as Mirko Zardini put it: "atmosphere, character and sensorial qualities are becoming key factors in the definition of a place, even from an economical perspective."[7] Further, many developments in urbanised areas of Europe are concerned with industrial heritage sites. Traditional master planning procedures focusing on merely pragmatic, functional and technical issues fail to address such delicate and "vague" factors as atmosphere and character.

Narrating place: Literary tools for topo-analysis

Zardini also aptly formulated the need for a new "sensorial" approach to urbanism, one that takes into account "experience as a tool to properly calibrate the relationship between inhabitants and the built environment". He goes on to argue:

> We have to find a different way of talking about, describing and planning our cities that suggest thinking of them as places for our bodies (and our souls); remember how mutable is our way of perceiving the urban environment; … we need to discover the possibilities provided by the urban environment in its various aspects – those of sound, smell, touch, vision and climate – and to look at them in new ways.[8]

Literary language, which has the capacity to dwell on the ambiguities and complexities of spatial experience, can inform such new ways of reading and designing urban places. Like public spaces and buildings on which societies are able to converge, literary accounts are vehicles for empathy, and thus can acquaint readers with the perspective of the "other". Theorists such as Edward T. Hall, Yi-Fu Tuan and Michel de Certeau argued that one should turn to the stories in which this information about social spatial practices is embedded.[9] Literary devices, such as narrative and poetic descriptions, are helpful in acknowledging different layers and perceptions of local urban cultures. These devices can address the urban environment as a complex expression of social, historical, material, spatial and temporal relations between people and their urban environment. Approaching the question of local urban cultures with a literary lens thus offers the possibility to understand not only how urban places are experienced, but also how they can be produced – both in words and in new urban designs and buildings.

Methodology: Three scriptive steps X three timeframes

In the context of their Advanced Architectural Design Course, master's degree students of architecture in Tampere worked within a framework of analytical devices rooted in literature, following three subsequent "scriptive" steps or phases: description, transcription and prescription.[10] In the "descriptive phase", students were encouraged to study the atmospheric qualities of the urban area by means of detailed observation. From these first observations, more in-depth studies were conducted, which involved describing existing and historical structures, materiality, architectural details, and the effect of seasonality. In the "transcriptive phase", the social aspect of the site analysis was brought to the fore. Students were asked to investigate how a place accommodates human activity and is experienced and used by different user groups. They were challenged to use narrative and character as devices to study people's activities in space. Narrative, seen as a connected sequence of events, helps to see a design in time, by exploring the possible programmes and events that it may accommodate. In the analysis of locations, existing local narratives provide insights in the way places are lived, used and remembered by inhabitants – all valuable information for the designer who is dealing with existing sites and neighbourhoods. Character can be used as a device to include the user's perspective in architecture. By taking on the perspective of another character, the designer gains empathy for the user. From this perspective, such aspects as materiality, routing, programmatic organisation, colour or sound are seen in a different light, and design decisions can be critically evaluated. Exploring the relationship between the activities of characters and the spatial setting of these activities, allows architects to consider the life of a building after its inauguration: a life marked by changing uses and users.

These literary instruments allowed the students to trace layers of use, take distance from their own perspective, and develop empathy for the experiences, needs and wishes of other characters. As will be seen later, after interviewing the local inhabitants, the students switched the perspective to the object of study, that is, writing from the perspective of the

building block itself. In the "prescriptive phase" fiction comes into play: based upon the findings in the previous phases, scenarios for possible futures are imagined. In the studio, this was the moment where the students turned to their individual design projects. In the present article, there is no space to further elaborate on the design proposals that were developed during this phase of the project, and instead the focus here is on the "descriptive" and "transcriptive" analyses of the urban area.

The findings from the process of urban analysis conducted by the students was complemented with earlier literary narratives about the area. Three literary sources were used: the novel *Musta Rakkaus* [Dark Love] by Tampere author Väinö Linna, from 1948;[11] a collection of short texts and poems *Amuri just eikä melkeen* [Amuri - Just as it is] edited by Erkki Kanerva, published in 1994 on the occasion of the demolition of the last workers' houses;[12] and the book *Pitsiportin takaa Amuriin ja maailmalle* [From behind the fretwork gate into Amuri and the world] by Tampere author and historian Pentti Keskinen, from 1993, which narrates a history of one building in the area, at the address "Amurinkatu 22", including its demolition and replacement by modern concrete apartment buildings.[13] Finally, a new literary narrative was added: a text written by the students from the perspective of the last remaining wooden building block today, pondering about its history and future.

Description: Tracing objects and materials

The first phase of the research and design studio, which started in late August 2017, was that of description. The whole group met for the first time at Pyynikki Square, the central public space in the area. Each student was asked to wander around on their own, select an object from the site, memorize the place where they had found it and think about its possible history.

The collected objects and their reflections about the spatial, material and social settings raised an initial discussion about the temporalities of the area. Clearly, buildings from different eras existed on a small surface of the city, from the wooden villas of the late 19th century and the large six-storey urban blocks of the 1920s around the main square to the prefabricated concrete apartment buildings of the 1970s. Between the concrete blocks, an old wooden building block is a reminder of earlier times; the Amuri building block, once a residential building for factory workers and nowadays a museum and local café.

From old maps and aerial photos, the students found out that this block was but one of a whole group of wooden residential blocks lined along an urban grid that is still recognisable today in the street pattern. Most of the wooden houses have been demolished and replaced by multi-storey apartment buildings surrounded by lawns. The atmosphere of such urban wooden residential neighbourhoods in Tampere, when still vibrant, was vividly described in 1948 by Väinö Linna:

> Here, the street was lined by old, yellow-coloured wooden houses, which were always half asleep, as if it didn't make any difference to them what happened inside or outside their walls. In the yards of the houses, one could see children playing, and laundry hanging on lines to dry – a view that easily tells about the wealth, gender and age of the inhabitants. In these blocks lived predominantly workers' families that earned their living in those big factories that gave the street its name.[14]

Indeed, it seems that in summer the shared courtyards of the building blocks were the locus of collective life. Remarkably, the same imagery can be found in a poem by Olavi Koskinen, who had lived in Amuri during his childhood in

Before 1900
traditional, wooden, familiar,
ornamented

20s
classism, rustyness, ornamented,
festive, brick

40s to 50s
less ornamentation, subtle colours,
plastered facades

60s to 70s
Pre-fabricated concrete, glass,
grayness

Fig. 2. Material collages, showing the materials of different building periods in the neighbourhood, made in the "descriptive phase" of the analysis by Annu Kumpulainen, Pekko Sangi, Yiran Yin and Clara Grancien.

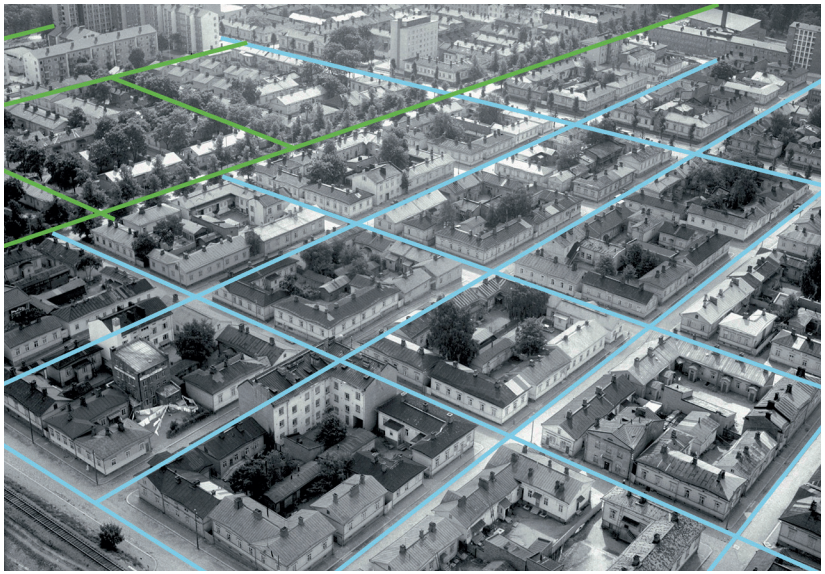

Fig. 3. Aerial photos of the Amuri neighbourhood in 1957 (left) and 2017 (right). The lines of the historical urban grid have been added by the students.

Fig. 4. Based on interviews with local residents, the students composed a "memory map", connecting recollections of the area to specific localities. Some examples of the site-specific memories gathered from the interviews:

"My first purchase was chocolate Easter eggs from the now nonextant gas station of Pynnikintori."
"I remember my father carrying me on his shoulders and at the same time videoing the demolition of the last wooden blocks next to the art museum and my home in 1993."
"I remember the pace here being quite slow. In my perception, this square was always filled with students, who always took their time leaving. It is quite a positive feeling."
"I remember the facades around the square looking wonderful, old and valuable. The atmosphere was warm. I wanted these beautiful, spatial things to be part of my life."
"Their used to be a legendary store called Pyynikin Liha [Pyyniki Meat] in here. I wish it still existed."
"The area in the 1990s was a vibrant street market and the restaurant staff were very friendly to the children. In the future there will be a tram line and car parking. That could be both a good and a bad thing. The city council stated that the square will remain a market place."

the 1920s and 1930s, which captures the materiality, the life in the courtyards, and the laundry hanging out to dry:

> Low were the buildings of Amuri,
> only one floor and made of wood.
> In the yard the laundry and outhouse,
> often adorned with a spruce.
> In summer firewood stocks filled the court,
> laundry hung out to dry on a cord.
> Bucksaws sang and axes slammed
> so as to fit the wood into the stove.[15]

The students paired such historical accounts of the wooden houses with their own observations, creating collages of materials, seasonal aspects and a study of shadows over the course of the days and throughout the year. In their interviews with the inhabitants, the focus was laid on mapping people's memories, uses and impressions of the place in different seasons. The memories were marked on a map with the aim to discover whether some places provoke positive or negative memories, and if there are places where people's collective memories were particularly evident.

Transcription: Social practices and the urban landscape

In the next "transcriptive" phase of the analysis, a shift was made from the focus on perceptual and atmospheric qualities of the site to the social-spatial practices: for instance, how does daily life take place in the area, how do people use the place, which daily trajectories can we discover, and are these in some way still related to the everyday life in the area in earlier times?

In Linna's novel, we see how the neighbourhood is linked to the landscape: the growing industrial town between the lakes, and the Pyynikki hill as a viewing and meeting point:

> Once, when Pauli and Marjatta had gone together to see the views, they headed up towards Pyynikki. That was the city's best-known viewing point, and for that reason also the most familiar, to the extent that its familiarity bothered Pauli. He had for the first time in his life asked a girl on a date, so what else would they do than walk up to Pyynikki? ... The shorelines and islands of both lakes were mirrored in their calm surface, while the blue sky and golden sun were reflected in their deep water. Somewhere, beyond the lakes, was endless landscape...
>
> On the east side unfolded the city, with its rooftops, factory chimneys and church spires. Religion and industry competed for height, but the church spires were far lower than the chimneys, expressing a time that had prioritised cold utility over heavenly issues. And the streets were busy with people and vehicles, each hurrying from somewhere to somewhere else, compelled by a thousand needs and aspirations.[16]

Remarkably, in Linna's novel the industry is not necessarily seen as a positive element in the urban landscape. The author is critical of the forces of industry, when utilitarian pressures bring about a sense of haste and a lack of reflection in the city. The Pyynikki hill is today still one of the most popular places for people to go to. Housed at the foot of the robust granite observation tower is a small café that – as the locals proudly argue – sells the best doughnuts in town, and where on Sunday afternoons, be it summer or winter, people queue to get in.

The view from the hill is relatively similar as it was in the 1940s. Some of the factories have disappeared, but the natural landscape, with the large lakes surrounded by green forest, still feels the same, and indeed, the urban landscape stretches out east of the hill. The church spires are still there, as are some of the factory chimneys in the city centre. Even though only a few of the factories are still operating, the old red brick factories along the river have become listed monuments, and during the evenings they are lit from below by special lamps, thus highlighting the atmosphere of the historical city centre. However, while the factories are nowadays cherished as monuments of Tampere's rich industrial heritage, and have been adapted for use as offices, restaurants and university buildings, not much is left of the residential buildings in Amuri.

The process of the demolition of the workers' housing started in the 1960s. The blocks of wooden buildings were then replaced by modern apartment buildings, standing amidst green areas. Some of the last blocks disappeared as late as 1994. Tampere author Pentti Keskinen remembers the demolition of his own childhood home at 22 Amurinkatu [Amuri Street] in 1968:

> On the last day of July, I spent a lonely evening in an old deserted house in Amuri. The new owners, demolition men and chainsaws were coming the next day. I was wandering around in the empty rooms of the building that had witnessed a lot – in my childhood home.
>
> My steps echoed strangely. Old memories came to my mind at every turn. I was standing in the dimming evening light in front of the ripped wallpaper, where I could make out a lighter spot. A portrait of my mother once hung there. I walked through a small room to my father's office. The patched-up spot in the cork flooring showed where the feared dentist's chair once had stood. I lingered in the waiting room where countless Tampere residents had sat, glancing at their watches, pressing their sore cheeks, sighing and reading old newspapers. Time drags for those who wait.
>
> Back to the apartment side. The so-called salon's ceiling paper had a tear in one particular spot: they never remembered to shorten the Christmas tree enough. The door to the chil-

dren's room had those familiar dents: my toy gun's ammo marks. And the kitchen, of course, was the warm heart of the household.

My melancholic musings are interrupted. There are noises coming from the back door. I go and have a look. An important-looking man announces that he has come to check the places for demolition. I tell him that today nobody else has any business coming inside except me. This "inspector" hurries off after taking a sip from his bottle.

I look at the clock. Still half an hour. I stand next to the curtainless window. Only the streetlamps give light to the inside as the electricity has been turned off. What would the builders of this house think about the situation? Or the owners nearly a hundred years ago, ... my grand dad? What about my father, who in the 1930s renovated the building as good as new?

It's midnight. My time is up. What is lost is lost...[17]

It seems that in the Amuri buildings, private and collective life sometimes converged: in the neighbours sat in the waiting room of the dentist's office or in summer in the courtyards. This mixture of domestic and collective life seems to have disappeared in today's Amuri neighbourhood. The apartment buildings are solely for residential use, while most amenities are located in the nearby city centre. Nevertheless, the Amurin Helmi café, housed in the last surviving wooden block, still breathes the atmosphere of the old days. Local residents arrive from early in the morning for breakfast, coffee or a chat with their neighbours.

At the same time as the students were asked to extend their analyses and make sense of the many interviews they had conducted with local residents, they also continued to work on

such places as the nearby Tampere Art Museum, the Pyynikki Square and specifically the Amurin Helmi café – places which, according to the interviews, stood out as places of encounter. In the assignment for the "transcription phase", the notion of "character" was suggested as a perspective from which to work. Seeing the place with the eyes of another character – a local inhabitant, for instance – would allow for empathic views of the area. Some students even took the idea of the character one step further and started to describe the selected sites from within: from the character of the building or place itself:

"From interviewing people, we kind of turned to interviewing the objects themselves in the design area. Annu Kumpulainen wondered what the Amurin Helmi café … would say if it could talk? How does it see itself and people? In her surrealistic play, objects become subjects and subjects become objects."[18]

I have been here among the first! I have seen how the area around me has changed over the decades. Before I was equal height with my neighbours and we all looked similar. We were together tightly. In the past, I could see the street with horses – now I see cars and bikes. What a busy life nowadays! Now I'm the lonely one among the younger buildings that are bigger and taller than me.

Me and my friends in this block are the last pieces of the old Amuri area. I don't grasp why, but many people of different ages seem to enjoy the time they spend with me. Maybe I remind them of the past because I'm made of wood and built in a traditional way. My delicate ornamentations and small scale make people feel at ease. I'm not as intimidating as the big concrete buildings around me.

I am now a café called Amurin Helmi, but before I served as a home to many working-class families and other residents.

> Maybe I wasn't as modern as the concrete buildings that came after me. I wasn't always considered cool like I am now. Maybe in different times some things have different values.
>
> The people seem to feel as if time stops here. They feel connected to some other time when they are with me. Maybe it is because of my presence? Or because I'm made from this material that came from the forest a long time ago and which reminds them of their childhood home. Or their summer cottage. Maybe it's the way I smell. The smell of freshly baked pastries lingers here from morning to evening.
>
> Some elderly people like to come here almost every day. I am always here for them. People come and go until it is six o'clock. Then I close my doors. I don't go to sleep still for hours. Even without people entering, I contribute to my surroundings.
> I think I'm important to the people around the area. The early bird-type of people enjoy having breakfast here with me. In the morning, I also see a wave of children rushing to the school. At noon, some people living or working around the area come to have lunch with me. Every Thursday it's pea soup – proper Finnish style.
>
> During the summer, I open myself to embrace the sun! It's warm enough for people to enjoy their coffee on my terrace.[19]

Prescription: Developing architectural scenarios

In the "prescription phase", the architectural and literary analysis and the resulting ideas and stories of the objects were used as the basis for architectural strategies. Continuing the idea of the buildings as characters, the students departed from the identity of the place through time and moved on to the question of how architectural interventions can emphasize aspects of local identity. Indeed, from the previous phases, it was seen how the place changed over time, from a workers' housing area in the 1940s, as represented in Linna's novel, through the process of modernisation and de-industrialisation until the 1990s, when the last of the wooden residential blocks made way for new apartment buildings, to the present day. What scenarios could be imagined for the next few decades? How could the place adapt to new urban conditions while still retaining its identity? The proposal by Annu Kumpulainen focused on the site next to the Amurin Helmi café. She used a literary text to evoke the atmosphere that a new architectural intervention that operates on these different levels of connections could offer:

> I am a community centre. I came here to serve the young and the old! I want to become the so-called third place for the people living in the Pyynikki and Amuri areas. Here people of all generations can meet and establish a new sense of community in the area.
>
> Here there are workshops for kids after school and restaurants to have lunch, as well as contemporary work facilities and group-work spaces. The old kindergarten and grocery store will have their new spaces in this building. The architecture is inspired by materiality and seeks to be experienced through all the senses.

In many of the scenarios developed by the students, the issue of urban memory was addressed by providing connections on several levels.

First, a series of projects sought to create a physical connection, either within the Amuri neighbourhood by proposing a new building next to the remaining wooden block, or, on a somewhat larger scale, between Amuri and the livelier

Fig. 5. Draft proposal for a community centre in the Amuri neighbourhood, Tampere, by Annu Kumpulainen.

Pyynikki Square by underpassing or overpassing a busy road that divided the two areas. Proposals for interventions included a running track that formed a physical bridge between the two neighbourhoods, a market hall with terraces overlooking the square and the further urban landscape, and a tunnel combining public transport facilities with shops and shelter for harsh weather conditions.

Second, the students proposed buildings that set out to connect to the memory of the place though materiality, for instance by combining contemporary building materials with the wooden details of the past. Wood featured significantly in a number of the projects, either as a façade cladding material or to give the interior spaces a more domestic atmosphere.

Third, a number of projects established a connection with the former residential blocks on the level of typology. Here, the courtyard that had featured in the former residential blocks as a collective space where families shared services and social life was reinterpreted and used in proposals for cultural centres, contemporary co-working spaces and hybrid functions for the community.

Finally, connections were made on a social level. In many projects, programmes were proposed for various user groups. Combining diverse functions, such as childcare facilities, meeting rooms, co-working spaces, sports facilities and cafés, would bring back some of the social activity that used to characterise the neighbourhood.

The use of the Description-Transcription-Prescription sequence helped the students to become acquainted with research methods for site analyses that allowed for a more experiential and social reading of the site. The encounter with local narratives, both through literary sources and on-site interviews, made the students aware of the role the place plays in the everyday life of its inhabitants, of its history, and of the relation to other parts of the city such as the factories and

the surrounding landscape of the Pyynikki hill and the lakes.

The design exercise in Tampere may provide an example of how a combination of physical and literary readings of an urban area that has undergone different stages of transformation may reveal valuable traces of urban history. For such medium-sized European cities as Tampere, which are struggling to cope with urban change while preserving their local identity, it is of crucial importance that architects learn to develop a certain sensitivity towards these experiential and social aspects that are usually absent in conventional design briefs. Only by acknowledging these local qualities, is it possible to develop socially inclusive and locally specific urban projects. The awareness of the biography of the place, which has developed over time, allowed for the design of projects more *attuned*, as Alberto Pérez-Gómez would say, to the historical, experiential and social characteristics of the place.

Endnotes

1. I wish to thank particularly Annu Kumpulainen, a student on the Architectural Design Course in autumn 2017 for the use of her study material as well as that of her group, and for her help with the translation of the Finnish texts.

2. The ARK-53100 Architectural Design Advanced Course is a research and design course that links theory and site research to an architectural intervention. The course aims to provide students who are preparing for their thesis with a solid theoretical base regarding public space and public building, and challenges them to take a stance within this discussion by means of critical writing, analysis and design. School of Architecture, Tampere University of Technology (From 1.1.2019, Tampere University), autumn 2017: the course was taught by Klaske Havik, Jenni Poutanen and Sanna Peltoniemi.

3. Michiel Dehaene, Klaske Havik and Bruno Notteboom, *OASE 89. Medium, The Mid-Size City as a European Condition and Strategy* (Rotterdam: Nai publishers, 2013), pp. 3-11

4. For a more detailed discussion see: Panu Lehtovuori and Klaske Havik, "Alternative politics in urban innovation", in: Lily Kong and Justin O'Connor (eds.), *Creative Cities, Creative Economies: Asian-European Perspectives* (New York: Springer, 2009), pp. 207-28.

5. Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Attunement: Architectural Meaning after the Crisis of Modern Science* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016).

6. Lehtovuori and Havik, op. cit.

7. Mirko Zardini, "Toward a Sensorial Urbanism" in: Jean-Paul Thibaud and Daniel Siter (eds.), *Ambiances in Action. Proceedings of the 2nd International Congress on Ambiances* (Montreal / Grenoble: International Ambiances Network 2012), pp. 19-26, p. 26

8. Ibid.

9. Edward T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension* (New York: Anchor Book Editions, 1990) [1966]; Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia. A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1974); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988) [1980]

10. As described in Klaske Havik, *Urban Literacy. Reading and Writing Architecture* (Rotterdam: NAi010, 2014).

11. Väinö Linna, *Musta Rakkaus* [Dark Love] (Helsinki: Bookwell Oy, 2010) [1948].

12. Erkki Kanerva (ed.), *Amuri just eikä melkeen* [Amuri: Just as it is] (Tampere: Amurilaiset r.y., Tampereen kaupunki, 1994).

13. Pentti Keskinen, *Pitsiportin takaa Amuriin ja maailmalle – Tarinaa vanhan amurilaistalon vaiheilta* [From behind the fretwork gate into Amuri and the world – Stories from the different stages of an old Amuri house], (Tampere: Tampere-Seura ry 1993), pp. 7-8.

14. Linna, op. cit., p. 10, translation by Klaske Havik and Gareth Griffiths.

15. Olavi Koskinen, in: Erkki Karneva, op. cit., p. 7, translation by Annu Kumpulainen.

16. Linna, op. cit., pp. 30-31, translation by Klaske Havik and Gareth Griffiths.

17. Keskinen op. cit., pp. 7-8, translation by Klaske Havik and Annu Kumpulainen.

18. From the project text of the “Temporalities” research group, ARK-53100 Architectural Design Advanced Course; Annu Kumpulainen, Pekko Sangi, Yiran Yin and Clara Grancien.

19. Ibid.

Klaske Havik, Juhani Pallasmaa, Alberto Pérez-Gómez, Jeff Malpas

DISCUSSION: PLACE IN ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN AND EDUCATION

Keynote-speaker panel discussion

Klaske Havik (**KH**), Visiting Professor, Tampere (Discussion moderator)
Juhani Pallasmaa (**JP**), Professor Emeritus, author, Helsinki
Alberto Pérez-Gómez (**APG**), Professor, McGill University, Montreal
Jeff Malpas (**JM**), Distinguished Professor, University of Tasmania, Hobart

KH:
As Jeff Malpas remarked in his contribution today, place is an opening concept: it is expansive, and it is about openness. Hopefully, the lectures of this seminar will also open further discussion about possible projects and ideas that we attempted to bring across: the understanding and designing of place. Today's globalized world seems to be more and more dominated by a rather abstract conception of space, by a growing dependency on technological devices, and by many demographical changes. This poses challenges for the way we conceive of the notion of place, for the study and appreciation of the relation between people and their living environment. As Alberto Pérez-Gómez suggested in his contribution, we recognize a need to develop a critical project, to recover the importance of place, and to reconsider this as a crucial concern for architecture. In this discussion we will try

to address what it takes to put 'place' back into architectural discourse, education, and practice. How can we understand what makes place specific? What kind of methods, or what kind of disciplines, do we need to bring in to architectural teaching and architectural debate? Let us start by looking at architectural education: how can architects learn to understand this singularity of place that Jeff Malpas was referring to?

JM:
Indeed, we talked about the importance of criticality – the capacity to ask questions – and criticality is something that one needs to develop. One needs to learn how to ask questions. And one of the problems, nowadays, is that questioning is not a skill that has much developed. So, that is the very first thing: how do you ask the question? Then, of course, you must learn how to listen to the answer. That is the other seldom learned capacity. Martin Heidegger once said that questioning is the piety of thinking. But some years later, he corrected this idea, insisting instead that questioning is not what comes first; what comes first is *listening*. That means you need to be attentive and responsive. So, again, that is something that must be learned. Sometimes you have to learn – as it were – to make things go quiet and just see what is there. To some extent, I think that relates to the phenomenological examination that Juhani Pallasmaa has talked about. It is about learning how to be attentive to things, learning how to let things speak to you. And that is very difficult to teach. You can provide the conditions that might allow it to develop, but it is not merely a matter of competency.

One of the real problems, I think, for education in all disciplines, is that genuine education means learning how to listen, how to attend, and how to question. These are not competencies that can be named on the ridiculous lists of learning outcomes that students are supposed to achieve in a particular course at university. And there is no absolute way to teach them. You can only put people in situations where the need to listen, to question, to make careful judgements becomes salient and pressing. This means putting people in situations where they are introduced to something unusual or different, perhaps through literature or art. The trouble is that, in the contemporary academic world, and in the face of its educational demands, such an approach has become increasingly difficult, especially since the necessary time and space is very often lacking – the problem is that the students are being educated, very pragmatically, to become people who will contribute to a particular industrial niche, project, or firm. This leaves little room to really encourage students to orient back to more existential questions, to learn to listen and question critically.

It is crucial to tackle that issue, to cope with that tendency. We need to provide context for critical reflection within the university, within the academy, and within public spaces. And it is precisely architects who are in an excellent position to do that, because architects often have a public persona and are involved in public projects through which they can contest not only what is happening in the academic world, and in architectural education, but also what is happening in society at large.

KH:
Thus, we need to learn to be attentive, to be receptive, and to pose questions, to be critical. I think Bachelard calls this a sort of receptivity being able to wander and to be surprised about things.

JM:
Yes! Sometimes daydreaming is a good thing to be doing. Daydreaming is an underestimated practice.

KH:
If we approach in our projects a place not as a mere location and allow ourselves to wander and to have our own impressions and our own perceptions, and try to make sense of these instead of immediately drawing on a map our objective observations, then we might reach some more attentiveness to places. If this attentiveness also has to do with taking seriously our own perceptions, then is there such a thing as experiential research that maybe architects should be much more aware of? Or maybe our schools should stimulate?

JP:
I think that a mistake that most architecture schools make is that they try to teach architecture. I have never said to my students that I was going to teach you architecture. Never. I will tell them: "I am going to teach you who you are." I believe architecture is about the world. Architecture is about life. I think it is impossible to head directly to architecture. Architecture is the final outcome of a lot of other things. Learning to be a human being, understanding life, understanding history … of course also understanding construction. Architecture is a tradition of thought. And architecture is simultaneously about the world but it's also about the tradition of architecture. And in today's world both are neglected. Both – world as a central factor in architectural thinking, and the tradition of architectural making and its layered meanings.

Another mistake made in architecture schools is to believe that architecture could or should be expression. The architect's self-expression – not at all! Jeff Malpas has been speaking about truth here: an architect has to work with the existence of truth, truth of place… There can't be truth unless architecture and education must respect and reveal those fundamental issues … otherwise architecture becomes just an aesthetic exercise.

APG:
The question of expression is important because the architect has a fundamental responsibility: the exercise of the imagination, of a hermeneutic imagination – our capacity to be able to interpret that comes from a meditative and critical relationship to the world at large. This is a visual intelligence that enables the recognition of place, which is what we are all talking about. Its cultivation is a real education. This responsibility is incredibly crucial because we don't have the luxury, like our ancestors, of a very strong set of shared values that generate the places or situations from the bottom up. This has been the problem of modern architecture from the beginning of the 19th century.

Like other modern and contemporary artists, architects must accept this responsibility while being aware that the issue is not self-expression. Octavio Paz said very eloquently that the poetic work expresses a world: a real poet amplifies the meanings and moods present in the world, rather than imposing personal feelings upon perceptions. Phenomenology has explained how the design of the physical environment, of buildings and cities, is profoundly crucial for our psychosomatic well-being – a constitutive part of our consciousness. Such design cannot be merely consensual, done by committee; it is the architect's responsibility, accounting for the user's experience and valorizing it, by listening carefully to stories about places, and accounting for the primacy of perceptions.

Also, particularly important is to broaden our understanding through a grasp of the tradition of the discipline. There is a deplorable short-sightedness with regard to our historic traditions. We think we are reinventing the wheel all the time, when in fact we may have valuable precedents at hand that enable significant innovation rather than mere novelty for consumption … this lack of history is largely responsible for

a recurring homogenization in the architecture of the last two centuries, including our contemporary parametric fashions.

JM:
An important challenge is engaging with tradition, whether in architecture, philosophy, history or any other discipline; even just the tradition that comes with being in a particular community. What is given to you – the material for thinking – is given to you through tradition; through what's already there; through what Heidegger calls your "facticity" or your "thrownness." If you disregard this sense of tradition, then you are left in limbo – without any real direction – and your thinking cannot really be genuine thinking. In our discussion, we are using the term "experience" not in a subjective sense, not merely as an expression. Rather, we are using it in the sense of a genuine engagement with the world. The work of Alberto and Juhani has emphasized that our engagement with the world is not primarily visual. What I would like to suggest is that the primary "mind" in our engagement with the world is actually manifested in touch. Aristotle said that the primary sense is touch, and, by touch, he does not just mean touching with the hand – that being only one form of touch – but, more genuinely, he sees touch as our *standing here*, on the earth. It is our feeling of the air around us. It is our sense of place. We touch place using all our senses. Indeed, touching place is the first experience we have, and through that touch, the world is genuinely given to us, with all of the memory, all of the history, and all of the tradition that comprises the world. And, once again, this "touch" is not subjective. It is a genuine engagement with that world.

So, when it comes to teaching, the challenge is to open up the world for all students, such that they then can find their own way – to themselves and to the world.

KH:
Still, this experience of being in the place, of using your different senses – experiencing a place while being present, walking, experiencing the materiality, the differences in the landscape etc., is an individual experience of that place. How can we, and our students, overcome this mere subjectivity? Or could we say that the subjective, individual experience is as important as so-called objective observations?

JM:
I have given this a great deal of thought, lately. There are two very important points that have to be made in response to that question. First, Alberto talked about language, and that leads to the fact that when we consider place it is actually articulation that is involved, because we are speaking of articulated experience; that which requires spoken, written, and linguistic articulation. That is absolutely essential and, of course, as soon as it involves language, it involves more than just you. Language itself brings tradition and brings others with you. The second point, then, is that when we engage with the world, we are not just engaging with ourselves. We are engaging with things. We are engaging with others. Indeed, we encounter others through things. So, the phenomenal character of experience and the linguistic character of experience go together, because language and things are tied together. Both mean that place is not just about ourselves, but always about others as well. It is about the world, and, in fact, there is no experience of the self, or of the subject, other than the experience of the world around and of others.

APG:
I might add that recent cognitive theory and neuroscience, supporting prior claims in phenomenology, insist that there


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is a continuity between language, gestures and intellectual attention, with about 80% of consciousness which is pre-representational, pre-linguistic, or pre-reflective – the terminology varies, depending on who your read. In any case, this implies that there is consciousness and knowledge that is embedded in our motor skills, the wisdom of the craft, or the wisdom that you have when you play an instrument or drive a car, which is not linguistic or representational but pre-reflective, synesthetic and fundamentally emotional, actually *enabling* that 20% which moderns usually identify with reflective consciousness. And that deep habitual wisdom within the culture is profound, it is something that really is there. That idea of a wisdom of the pre-reflective offers at least the beginning of an answer to your question about subjectivity. It's a false problem. It's a problem that comes from Cartesian thought.

JP:
Alberto mentioned John Hejduk in his lecture. John Hejduk – in my view – is one of the central educators in our field from the last half a century. In an interview, David Schapiro asked him about his teaching method, and he answered: "osmosis". I think this is an extreme answer and a precise answer. Our most important way of learning is through our being and sharing. Being in the same place, if you will. My own professor Aulis Blomstedt said several times in his lectures in the late 1950s: "For an architect, a more valuable talent than imagining, fantasizing space is the capacity to imagine human situations." I think that's a central issue. In schools of architecture, we should somehow focus on these human situations and sensitize architects for those human situations, because architecture is a consequence of registering and understanding and empathizing with these human situations.

KH:
That's also where the literary methods come in. As architects, we are imagining human actions in space. We're thinking from other character's perspective. These methods allow one to develop empathy.

JP:
Yes, it's comes back to the word "experience". Experience can only be approached through the self, through your own experiencing. You cannot mediate an experience unless you experience yourself. An authentic architect cannot design a house for another human being as the other. The architect has to become the dweller. You can only design for yourself because you can only imagine your own feelings. And in the end, architecture is always a gift. It is a gift by which the architect gives the building to the dweller after having acted as the client – in many cases for a number of years. So, I would like to emphasize the importance of empathic thinking. Currently, a rather encouraging scientific understanding is emerging, discussing how our capacity for empathy neurologically takes place.

APG:
In some languages, namely in French, *expérience* is also an experiment – which is very Cartesian, thus very problematic, because experiment is not experience. It's framing: experiment. While experience resonates with the Greek notion of αἴσθησις [*aísthēsis*, "perception"]. We misunderstand this notion after the 18th century as "aesthetic," believing it to be a judgement, when in fact αἴσθησις, for the Greeks, was an embodied experiential knowledge which was both – and simultaneously – cognitive and emotional. Like in many countries around the world, the conceiving of knowledge is emotional. You know it here [pats his chest], not here [points at his head]. And that division is a real problem. This under-

standing has affected architecture since the 19th century. We build a shelter and it's totalitarian, so we add some ornament depending on if we have money or not and that's aesthetic. But there's a real misunderstanding of aesthetic, the concept, still. The interiority of experience that Juhani is talking about is indeed the αἴσθησις knowledge in the Greek sense of the term. Multi-sensory, synesthetic, kinesthetic, in-place – rather than in judgement.

KH:
We have to acknowledge that when discussing place, we cannot do that only from the discipline of architecture. There were a few other disciplines that were mentioned – neuroscience, for instance – and Juhani, at the end of your lecture you named two other disciplines: first biology and then you suggested architectural psychology. Does something like that exist or should architectural psychology or biology be introduced as a serious field of architectural research?

JP:
Well, Alberto and I have been rather suspicious about the discussion on the relations of neuroscience and architecture, because neurosciences have a strong tendency to become a new technocracy of measuring and relying too much on the single invention of a functional brain-imaging instrument, which actually only shows differences in blood circulation, or volumetric blood circulation. And that is very, very far from meaning. There is a tendency to read directly the image on the screen as meaning. Which is a total mistake. But at the same time the invention, for instance, of mirror neurons, in my view, genuinely offers a way of understanding both architecture and abstract art.

KH:
Can you maybe say a bit more to our audience about what these mirror neurons are about?

JP:
Mirror neurons are a special category of neurons, which make us unconsciously mirror or mimic the external world, primarily of course other people but also objects. This concept opens the possibility to understand why abstract images' constructions speak to us. Because we embody them and we in a way speak to ourselves … inspired or stimulated by the image.

APG:
It also explains the phenomenon of phantom limb pain; for example, if someone has a limb missing and feels pain in that limb, this is explained through the work of mirror neurons.

KH:
Thus you respond to things or movements that are not in your body but your body responds.

JM:
In a certain sense, there is already a built-in capacity to respond to what is happening elsewhere.

APG:
It also relates to the problem of mood in architecture and in poetry … the fact that the mood is external … we always tend to say that you are the one who is sad, for instance, while mood is fundamentally in place. Rainer Maria Rilke said it best: "The Inner, what is it … if not intensified sky?"

JM:

Actually, that is an idea you can also find, for instance, in Heidegger, who argues that *Befindlichkeit* (literally the sense of "how one finds oneself") and *Stimmung* ("mood" or "attunement") are the basic features of how we are in the world. But, coming back to the discussion about other disciplines, one cannot really be a philosopher without engaging across numerous disciplines – even though many philosophers do seem to avoid such engagement. I do a great deal of work in philosophy, but I also do work in cognitive science, and I engage with people, for instance, working in climatology.

There is always empirical evidence that is relevant to the sorts of claims I want to make. What characterizes my approach is that I think places are fundamental, ontological structures. I do not think of place as being just biologically determined, or just determined by what happens to be the structure of the brain. This is a very important point to understand, because, when I speak about an ontological structure, I am not referring to a bodily structure, like that of a creature.

So, when I say that, in order for anything to be, it has to be emplaced, I am not suggesting that only applies to creatures and the sorts of things we might find on the surface of the Earth. Rather, I am saying that my account of place actually follows from the very character of the concepts that are at work here. It is essentially the sort of account that Aristotle or Immanuel Kant or Martin Heidegger would give – even more fundamental than a biological account. What such an account implies is that there will, in fact, be certain structures that are necessary to any notion of human being. Now, some people find that problematic, because they think it is too generalized, but any conceptual thinking at all involves exactly that sort of generalization – thinking in terms of those basic concepts and essentialities that make for the very possibility of something.

That is a most fundamental or basic form of thinking.

Physics, for example, attempts such thinking at the level of the ultimate constituents of the world as we see it. Philosophy, however, questions even the fundamental constituents, or requirements, of any sort of being. So, when I argue that place is necessary or essential, I am saying that place is the very foundation for the possibility of any appearance, whatsoever, of any sort of living or non-living being. And that means that place even constrains biology. When, for instance, Alvar Aalto talks about humankind being biologically determined, and uses the notions of prospect and refuge as deriving from our biology, I think he should be taken as referring to something more ontological than strictly biological, because, I would argue, prospect and refuge are themselves absolutely basic features of what it is to be in the world as a human being.

Staying with this notion of place, but taking it back, more specifically, to an earlier topic, perhaps I could share a direct precaution that I have about neuroscience. I think it has become something of a fashion, presented as a discipline that will answer all our questions. But it can't. As soon as neuroscience is thought of in that way, the proper boundaries that allow neuroscience to work, at all, are forgotten. Neuroscience also has a strong tendency to be reductive; to treat everything only in terms of the central brain and firing neurons. But a part of what I think we are all saying is that there are at least two ways of understanding the world. One is understanding the world in terms of purely spatialized mechanistic events. Even if such events include a degree of quantitative determinacy, they still constitute a fundamentally spatialized form of understanding. But the nature of spaces, themselves, require a recognition that there is another, second way in which the world presents itself; not spatialized but constituted in terms of discreet places. It is this second way that proves crucial in understanding the possibility of a human mode of being. Human beings are not reducible to, if you like, quantum machines or quantum

calculators of some sort. They are not just bits of metal that move around in space. That, in fact, is why I think we are emphasizing the notion of experience, because experience belongs to that second understanding, that human mode by which the world appears. Physics does not deal with the world, but with the causes of a spatialized universe. Architecture deals with the world – because it inescapably deals with place.

Transcription:
Susanna Elmnäinen
Editing:
Klaske Havik, Pekka Passinmäki, Gareth Griffiths

NOTES ON THE CONTRIBUTORS

Klaske Havik is Associate Professor of Architecture, Methods & Analysis at Delft University of Technology, Delft, The Netherlands, and was a visiting professor at Tampere University of Technology, School of Architecture, Tampere, Finland in 2015-2017. Her research interest is in the experience, use and imagination of places. She is the author of *Urban Literacy: Reading and Writing Architecture* (2014) and co-editor, with Tom Avermaete and Hans Teerds of *Architectural Positions: Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere* (2009)

Jeff Malpas is a distinguished professor at the University of Tasmania, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, and visiting distinguished professor at Latrobe University in Melbourne, Victoria. He has published extensively on topics ranging across art, architecture, film, geography and philosophy. He is the author of *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (1999/2018) and *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World* (2006), and the editor of *The Intelligence of Place: Topographies and Poetics* (2015).

Juhani Pallasmaa is an architect and professor emeritus at Aalto University, Espoo, Finland. He has taught and lectured extensively in universities around the world, and held several visiting professorships in the United States. He has published numerous essays and forty-five books on architecture, design and art, including *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (1996/2012), *The Thinking Hand: Existential and Embodied Wisdom in Architecture* (2009), and *The Embodied Image: Imagination and Imagery in Architecture* (2011).

Pekka Passinmäki is an architect, philosopher and university lecturer at Tampere University, School of Architecture, Tampere, Finland, where he teaches theory and philosophy of architecture. He is the author of *A New Poetics of Architecture: A Phenomenological Study of the Possibility of Overcoming Technology in Contemporary Architecture* (2011, in Finnish) and an editor of *Architecture and Experience Now* (Architectural Research in Finland, vol 2, no 1, 2018).

Alberto Pérez-Gómez is Saidye Rosner Bronfman Professor of the History of Architecture at McGill University, in Montreal, Canada, where he directs the History and Theory option. He has lectured extensively worldwide. Among his extensive catalogue of writings are the books *Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science* (1983), *Built upon Love: Architectural Longing after Ethics and Aesthetics* (2006), and *Attunement: Architectural Meaning after the Crisis of Modern Science* (2016).

PICTURE SOURCES

Jeff Malpas
Fig. 1. Heydar Aliyev Cultural Center, Baku. Photo: Wilth <https://www.flickr.com/photos/wilthnet> (accessed 28.4.2019), via Flickr.
Fig 2. Sydney Opera House. Photo: Roaming Appetite <https://aroamingappetite.com/2016/01/19/> (accessed 28.4.2019).

Alberto Pérez-Gómez
Fig. 1. Cover of *The Concept of Dwelling*. Photo: the author
Fig. 2. Piazza d'Italia, New Orleans. Photo/©: Timothy Brown <https://www.flickr.com/photos/atelier_flir> (accessed 30.4.2019), via Flickr.
Fig. 3. Basilica of Saint Peters, Rome. Photo: Alvesgaspar <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Alvesgaspar/Places/Italy#/media/File:Basilica_di_San_Pietro_in_Vaticano_September_2015-1a.jpg> (accessed 21.1.2019), via Wikimedia Commons.
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Juhani Pallasmaa
Fig. 1. "Day 1". Photo courtesy of the author.
Fig. 2. Rendle nomadic tribe settlement. Photo courtesy of the author.

Pekka Passinmäki
Fig. 1. Thermal Baths, Vals. Photo: Micha L. Rieser <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Therme_Vals_outdoor_pool,_Vals,_Graubünden,_Switzerland_-_20090809.jpg (accessed 28.4.2019), via Wikimedia Commons.
Fig. 1. Thermal Baths, Vals. Photo courtesy of the author.
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Klaske Havik
Fig 1. Amuri Workers' Museum, Tampere. Photo courtesy of the author.
Fig. 2. Material collages by Annu Kumpulainen, Pekko Sangi, Yiran Yin and Clara Grancien. Source: Annu Kumpulainen.
Fig. 3a-b. Aerial photos of the Amuri neighbourhood in 1957 and 2017. Photo: E. M. Staf, 1957, Tampere Museum archives (Tampereen museoiden kuva-arkisto). The same area in 2017; Source: Google Earth.

Fig. 4. Memory Map of Amuri, Tampere. Source: Annu Kumpulainen
Fig. 5. Sketch proposal for a community centre, Amuri, Tampere. Source: Annu Kumpulainen.

Seminar photos courtesy of Arto Jalonen

"Nothing is that is not placed" wrote Aristotle. Everything *takes place*, and architecture, by default, is a profession that deals with, intervenes in, transforms and creates places. In the architecture of the contemporary globalized world, however, the understanding of the particular place in which a building or a city is situated is often taken for granted or not addressed at all. *Understanding and Designing Place: Considerations on Architecture and Philosophy* comprises five essays on architecture and philosophy from the standpoint of *place*. The essays are based on presentations held at a seminar at the Tampere School of Architecture in 2017. The seminar concluded with a discussion, the transcript of which completes the book.

Contributors:
Klaske Havik
Jeff Malpas
Juhani Pallasmaa
Pekka Passinmäki
Alberto Pérez-Gómez

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